This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600073425R

MR. VAUGHAN'S HEIR.

A Novel.

BY

FRANK LEE BENEDICT,

AUTHOR OF 'MISS DOROTHY'S CHARGE,' &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

London:

SAMUEL TINSLEY,

10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1874.

[*All rights reserved.*]

251. b. 434.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Queen of the Bohemians	1
II.	A Revelation	22
III.	His Victim	49
IV.	The Giant's Castle	78
V.	The Presentiment Fulfilled	93
VI.	So near Death	123
VII.	"Then I'll Tell"	145
VIII.	Out of His Reach	167
IX.	"What God hath joined together"	194
X.	No Hope	215
XI.	Together	222
XII.	Nina's Ghost	233
XIII.	The Mill of the Gods	256
XIV.	Five Years	282

MR. VAUGHAN'S HEIR.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUEEN OF THE BOHEMIANS.

THE autumn had come before Nathalie La Tour's affairs rendered the voyage to America practicable. She was wild with impatience to go. More numbers of the *Bohemian* had reached her, bringing fresh incense of praise, and eagerly demanding her presence in the New World, where, according to the *Bohemian*, a whole nation waited to greet her with the admiration due her genius and her success.

Nathalie had looked forward to attracting great attention on the steamer: of course all her fellow-voyagers would be excited about the presence of so celebrated a woman. Unfortnnately, Nathalie's stomach was not of the

strongest, and from Liverpool to New York she could only lie flat in her berth and wish disconsolately that she had never been born. But she could not even be miserable in peace, for Susanne, equally wretched, and no better able to bear it than if she had been a genius also, lay moaning night and day on the upper shelf, finding slight comfort in peevish complaints against the cruelty of her mistress in having dragged an unfortunate old woman forth to meet an awful death upon the sea, in spite of prayers and resistance. Susanne always insisted upon her unwillingness to go, though she had scolded straight through the summer over the delay in their departure.

But the misery ended at length; land was in sight; the steamer sailed majestically up the beautiful Bay, and Nathalie got on deck to catch a first view of the great city where the fulfilment of the future awaited her.

She was, perhaps, a little surprised that the cannon from the different forts did not boom out a welcome as she passed, but when the vessel reached the dock, what she called her triumph commenced.

The editor of the *Bohemian*, accompanied by representatives of the illustrious band which gave the paper its name, came on board to

receive her. Nathalie could have wished that most of the party had been differently attired, but consoled her easily disturbed taste by remembering how many examples there were of genius appearing indifferent to such matters.

Lodgings had been procured for her at a French hotel in the upper part of the town, and the very evening of her arrival there was a gathering of the Bohemian clique in those apartments. The editor had told her how anxious these earnest-souled men and women were to welcome her appearance among them, and though she would have been glad to rest and recover her looks a little, the fear of disappointing them and her own eagerness to taste her triumph to the full prevented her asking for any delay. Indeed, as she understood the matter, these unknown worshippers had prepared an entertainment in her honour—to be given at the hotel in order to spare her fatigue, but an entertainment of which she was to be the chief guest.

The supper was a good one; nothing had been spared, even to champagne; and the Bohemians—more shame to an unappreciative world, who paid slight attention to the needs of such elevated natures—did not drink champagne every day. A few men appeared in correct

evening dress, more or less dilapidated; several with their coats tightly buttoned in order to conceal the lack of waistcoat. Others made as much as possible of that garment, conscious that it was the best point in their attire. There were long-haired poets, who had pined voiceless until they found utterance through the columns of the *Bohemian*. Men whose pictures year after year were sent ignominiously back from exhibitions, owing to the malice and envy of the "hanging committee"; but the *Bohemian* was at hand now to give their wrongs a tongue, not to mention interminable criticisms upon those remarkable works. There were women celebrated, through the *Bohemian*—women who wrote, women who painted, women who acted and sang as neither Rachel nor Patti had ever done, though fate and a gross world refused a recognition of their gifts. But men and women, they bowed before Nathalie, and the supper proved a brilliant success.

Many poems were recited in her honour; she was called on for a speech; she made one that was loudly applauded. She was crowned with a garland of flowers, and hailed Queen—"Queen of the Bohemians!" Her heart swelled, and Susanne peeping at the scene through a half-open door, fairly wept with joy, convinced,

like her young mistress, that this adulation was the admiring utterance of a whole people—an entire continent.

But the culminating moment was when the prophet of the band rose to pour forth the inspired measures her coming had roused in his mighty soul. This tribute had been left till the last—it followed directly after the coronation, and Bohemia felt that nothing more was possible in the way of honouring its new sovereign. Nathalie was convinced of the beauty of the poem; everybody rushed into ecstacies; one enthusiastic female kissed the hem of the prophet's robe—a rather greasy black frock-coat, much worn about the seams. But somehow, try as she might to appreciate the tribute, it seemed to Nathalie that she must be less familiar with English than she supposed, though she had spoken it all her life, for these glowing strains sounded almost like an unknown language in her ears.

The editor of the *Bohemian* was too wise a man to lose any time. On the very next day Nathalie signed various legal documents and a cheque for a goodly amount; a share of that new lever of the world belonged to her, and her name would appear on the next issue as one of the editors.

Those first days were so full of occupation, that Nathalie had little leisure for surprise or disappointment, though the moment she set eyes on the leaders of the clan, old Susanne expressed her opinion that if literary men wore such shabby trousers, for her part she would prefer those with less poetry and better clothes.

Nathalie had several articles to prepare for the *Bohemian*, and, as newspaper writing was new to her, of course they occupied a great deal of attention. Then her friends were much about her, and somehow, men and women, they always seemed to be eating—how it chanced Nathalie could not tell. She began to fear she had a mania for making people eat, and that these poetical natures yielded just to gratify her.

Why there was Mrs. O'Moo, who gave lectures (in California) 'On the Radicalism of Jesus Christ,' who said that the fathers of women's children ought to be whatsoever men those women happened to have a spiritual affinity for at the time—even she ate, ethereal as her nature was—ate breakfast and dinner often, and extra meals beside. And young Mr. Fustian, with his long hair in his eyes, and poetry upon his lips, whose soul had called Nathalie's soul across the vast deep, he ate; and all the intermediates

between these two extremes of the Bohemian clique did more eating during the first ten days after Nathalie's arrival than they had done in months.

It was a little blow to Nathalie when Miss Grun (who painted such lovely pre-Raphaelite pictures, which some man high in authority kept out of the Exhibition from jealousy)—I say it was a little blow to Nathalie, when the fair Miss Grun made a symposium at her studio in honour of the Queen, to be set down to cold beans and vinegar, and a huge pitcher of ale to moisten the repast.

But when Nathalie's hotel bill came in, she no longer wondered at cold beans and vinegar being the usual Bohemian ambrosia at supper. She was almost frightened to death, accustomed as she was to the moderate prices of the Continent, and Susanne gave her an inordinate scolding.

There were items in the bill which puzzled Nathalie exceedingly. The expense of the entertainment given by the Bohemians on her arrival was set down. This must have been forgetfulness on the part of the deputation—Nathalie felt that she could not bring herself to mention it. There were carriages at late hours of the night, and double prices for them in con-

sequence. The only carriages ordered at such times had been those her guests had commanded; but this was a matter also that she could not mention to her friends. Then followed items such as these:—Three rum punches at bar; four gin cocktails at bar; six hot whiskies at bar. Nathalie did not even know what the bar was. Susanne was unable to comprehend the bill because the clerk had written it in English, but she sent for the hotel-keeper, and rated him fearfully. He listened with the composure only a French landlord can attain, then reminded Nathalie that the day after her arrival he had asked her if orders given by her guests were to be set down to her account. Nathalie recollected this —remembered too that she had replied in the affirmative, without stopping to think the question an odd one—her head had been full of her honours.

But Madame had not forgotten? Very well —all these extraordinary items were the result of this direction on Madame's part. Nathalie bethought herself that Bohemianism was fraternity, and held her peace.

Miss Grun happened to come in while Nathalie was still regarding the long row of figures, and Susanne upbraiding her loudly. Miss Grun

soon understood the case. No doubt the bill was right enough (Nathalie could not bring herself to do more than show the total); she must expect horrible charges if she lived at an hotel.

"I do not know what your fortune may be," said Miss Grun, beautifully oblivious of the fact that nothing else had been talked of in Bohemia for months before Nathalie's arrival; "but it is only the very wealthiest persons who can afford to live at such places in New York."

"I did not know," returned Nathalie. "I wonder Mr. Counter did not tell me."

"O Counter is always in the clouds," said Miss Grun disdainfully.

"Or Mrs. O'Moo," continued Nathalie.

Miss Grun gave vent to a sharp, derisive laugh.

Even in Bohemia ladies sometimes quarrelled, and a bitter enmity existed between the female lecturer and the maiden artist. The origin of the difficulty was quite obscure; but it appeared tolerably certain that a ruffled petticoat was at the bottom of the feud—a ruffled petticoat, and a man, of course.

In Bohemia it was by no means uncommon for people to borrow articles of attire. Nathalie

had herself noticed a blue crape shawl which belonged apparently to six different ladies, and was acquainted with a turquoise pin which made regularly the round of the younger gentlemen's shirt-fronts. So following this sweet rule of communism and fraternity, Miss Grun had once upon a time lent Mrs. O'Moo the ruffled petticoat—but she did not lend her lover. Mrs. O'Moo took him without leave; whether as a lawful perquisite on the ground of affinity, or a natural accompaniment to the petticoat, I am unable to say—she took him, however, and *hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

So now Miss Grun emitted a derisive laugh, and, as if the sound had been a magic spell which forced her into speech, she began the melancholy history. O'Moo did not, in reality, belong to the band over which Nathalie ruled. She was a New Light—had foisted herself upon Bohemia, and stuck there like a barnacle to a ship!

Miss Grun enveloped Nathalie in the petticoat—blinded her with the ruffle—produced a picture of the false lover—wept—moaned—had to be comforted with curaçoa and stayed with sweet-cake. At the end of all her eloquence, Nathalie's ideas were so vague that she could not tell whether the young man had

tried to cut the border off O'Moo's under garment as a present to his lady-love, or O'Moo had attempted to make a ruffle for her petticoat out of some article of the gentleman's attire.

Nathalie thought that Miss Grun ought to confine herself to telling stories with her brush.

But to return to the matter in hand, which they did, after Miss Grun grew composed. The artist advised Nathalie to take a furnished house, and the counsel met with the approbation of several of the male Bohemians who chanced to stray in at the moment.

These brethren took lunch, by the way. They found Miss Grun daintily nibbling her sweet-cake, and proposed joining her, "not to interrupt."

Nathalie did take a furnished house, and spent a good deal of money on what she called "trifles" for its further embellishment, and made it a very pretty abode indeed. Her expenses were lessened, but she had so many hangers-on that they were still heavier than she could afford. For instance, when Miss Grun confided to her with bitter tears that she was forced to sleep on a sofa in her studio, and cut her bread with a palette knife, how could Nathalie avoid offering her a home?

Then some poet would fling himself upon the floor in her drawing-room, and beg for a dagger wherewith to cut his throat—Nathalie would lend him fifty dollars instead. Somebody was always dining with her, more somebodies going to theatres or opera at her expense, and most of the band, male and female, soon appeared in entirely new wardrobes. But even this did not prevent articles of dress being frequently borrowed. However, old Susanne put a stop to that privilege. She and Mrs. O'Moo finally had a battle royal about the matter. Susanne caught O'Moo one evening rummaging among her mistress's trinkets and laces. O'Moo said she was searching for a pattern, Susanne swore that she was stealing a pocket-handkerchief. Between them they made such an outrageous racket that a stray policeman stopped before the house, and Nathalie and the rest of the Bohemians rushed upstairs in wild excitement.

Luckily Susanne could only tell her story in French, so scarcely any one beside Nathalie understood the charge she brought. But O'Moo was furious, and wanted the Queen to send the old woman adrift. Nathalie refused to do this, so O'Moo deserted the Bohemians in disgust, and went back to California in the

society of a man who gave concerts to illustrate the "Music of the Future," and O'Moo explained his meaning in a lecture styled the 'Probable Nebulistic State of Souls in the Inner Cosmos.'

So the weeks went on to November. Nathalie's kingdom did not prove the golden land she had expected. What was the good of making pretty toilettes for men who seldom combed their hair, and to sit in the room with women who pinned on their flounces and wore stockings that needed darning!

Then one day there came a famous lady from another clique, and told Nathalie she had made a mistake—been swindled, in fact. The Bohemians were a low, impecunious set, possessing no influence whatever. Nathalie ought to join the Transcendentals—buy into their journal, which was the real lever that was to move the world. Then appeared somebody else belonging to another "ism" which was the only light to live by. Then a third set descended upon her, and the Bohemians fought all the intruders tooth and nail, and fairly set a guard in the royal abode to keep their Queen from being stolen. Between them all Nathalie felt terribly confused and at a loss, and was almost inclined to run away and subside into

obscurity. Bohemianism in New York she found was very different from the upper world of Parisian Bohemia, glimpses of which had so dazzled her.

Then her ready money was almost exhausted. She had debts. The fortune from her new book did not pour in its golden tide. The editor of the *Bohemian* was constantly demanding material aid. Altogether, Nathalie began to find her crown a thorny one, and to be sorely perplexed and troubled whenever she had time to think. And a period came when she must take time, for her affairs were in a critical situation.

So it chanced that on the very evening of Darrell Vaughan's return she sat alone in her pretty *salon*. The whole Bohemian set had gone to a lecture for which Nathalie had been persuaded to buy a score or two of tickets, but she herself remained at home, and went down into the depths of despair.

Since her arrival in America, Nathalie's days had been so full of occupation that she had thought little of Vaughan. She was fond of indulging in a bit of sentiment over her girlish dream—fond of saying, writing, and believing that her heart had been crushed by a cruel tyranny which had separated her from the man

she loved, and tied her fast in unholy wedlock; but it was a very pleasant misery. The Bohemians were not interested in politics, or in anything or anybody outside their circle, so it was only lately that mention of Vaughan had reached Nathalie. But she had learned something of the prominent position he occupied, and wondered occasionally how and when they should meet. She could not have accounted for the feeling which restrained her from making an effort to bring this meeting about. She liked to think of the possibility; yet mixed with the romantic pleasure there was a certain shrinking, almost a dread, which kept her passive.

Vaughan had lately read Nathalie's last book, though he had forgotten the name of the man she married, and did not connect this new author with the girl he had met at Clarens.

He recollected Nathalie herself very well, and often felt angered that he had not been able further to study the peculiar nature which had greatly impressed him. Girl and woman, Nathalie always showed for more than her mental gifts really warranted, and Vaughan had mistaken the glitter for gold. Often in his thoughts he compared her with Elizabeth, to the latter's disadvantage. There was a satisfaction in underrating his wife. The more he

was obliged to make use of Elizabeth's talents, the fonder he became of doing this—probably to convince himself that she had no important part in his work.

When he dashed out of the house after the scene with his wife on the evening of his return, he went to his Club to dine. A literary acquaintance whom he happened to meet, told him over their wine—of which both drank a goodly share—the history of the woman whose novel he had just been reading, and Vaughan learned that destiny had again flung Nathalie L'Estrange within his reach.

So late that evening, as the Queen of the Bohemians sat alone, succeeding very tolerably in being miserable, because she hated solitude, the door opened suddenly, and Darrell Vaughan came once more, without warning, into her presence.

She had not looked up, supposing the intruder to be Susanne, armed with some sort of reproof or complaint.

"Nathalie," he called; "Nathalie!"

She raised her eyes and saw him standing before her—handsomer than ever, she thought. Dissipated habits—above all, the use of that poisonous drug which he craved more and more—had terribly sapped Vaughan's vigour, bodily

and mentally; but as yet there were few outward physical signs. To-night the wine and spirits which he had drunk would have left many men helplessly intoxicated, but with him the only effect was to make his face deadly pale, kindle a fire in his beautiful eyes, and quicken fancy and tongue with the eloquence which grew daily more dependent upon such stimulus.

Nathalie started to her feet, and uttered his name, half in joy, half in terror—a terror for which she could not have accounted to herself had she sought to do so.

He was beside her, clasping her hands in his, raining kisses upon them, uttering wild words, the poetry of which rather than their full meaning struck Nathalie's fancy. But partly the spirit of coquetry so strong within her, partly that inexplicable dread which had sent a chill across her joy, enabled her quickly to regain an apparent composure.

"That will do," she said laughing, "even as a tribute to an acquaintance so pleasant as ours was."

She drew her hands from his clasp and sat down. He would have flung himself on his knees before her, but she held up a warning finger.

"I shall send for Susanne," said she. "Susanne outwitted us once—she will come down upon you like an ogress."

"And they married you—carried you off—and I was helpless!" cried Vaughan. "I only knew to-night that you were near; I have been away for several weeks. O what a life it has been since I lost you! But I have found you, found you, my beautiful Nathalie!"

"I have seen your name frequently," she replied; "you have been growing famous, and I—I have not been idle."

"Idle? I should think not! Why you are the most celebrated woman of the day. I have read every one of your books."

She believed his statement in regard to her fame, despite of the unpleasant fact that only to-day the editor of the *Bohemian* had been after more money to keep the journal in existence, and her publishers had hinted that if she decided to bring out a novel during the winter it would be well for her to advance the sum necessary to meet the expenses. But she forgot these trifles in the pleasure of listening to the exaggerated encomiums which he lavished upon her works and her success.

"And you are married too," Nathalie said, when her vanity was, for the moment, sufficiently

gratified to be able to think of something else. "The only person I have met who knew you told me that—Mr. Peters."

Mr. Peters was the literary man who had informed Vaughan of Nathalie's whereabouts.

"Yes, I am married," returned he moodily.

"Tell me what your wife is like. Mr. Peters only knew the fact. Indeed, he did not pretend to be well acquainted with you."

"No; I just knew him from our belonging to the same Club."

"Never mind him," broke in Nathalie; "I just know him too, and very heavy he is on hand." She uttered the bit of slang with a slight foreign accent, that made it amusing. "Tell me about your wife. How does she look—is she handsome? Is—is she fond of you?"

"No, to both questions," replied Vaughan. "There is nothing to tell. I was married the spring after I saw you at Clarens. My wife is the dullest, most commonplace of women; she goes her way and I go mine. The marriage was a family matter; considered a good thing for us both by our relations; and that 's all there is about it."

"Ah," said Nathalie. His account was so perfectly in keeping with her French ideas of

matrimony, that it seemed natural. "And you have no sympathies, no tastes in common?"

"Bah! Does not marriage prevent such? Don't let 's talk of her! I had lost you—nothing made any difference. O Nathalie, those lovely days at Clarens!"

"But suffering developes the soul," she replied, with her grandest manner. "I should not have won the fame which is mine had I never suffered."

She looked so pretty, voice and gestures were so sweet and graceful, that Vaughan did not notice the absurdity of the speech.

"Then you did care, Nathalie?"

"O don't talk of those days," she sighed. "We shall be good friends now; no one can hinder that—soul-friends!"

"All my heart and soul are yours!" he exclaimed. "I love you—I have always loved you."

She held up her finger, laughing, though her colour changed and her eyes softened.

"I have forbidden such words in my hearing," said she. "You are my friend, my best friend—my only one, indeed. Ah, life is sad, sad—my way is very lonely."

She wanted poetry and sentiment, that was evident, so Vaughan prepared to do both to

any extent. She talked freely about herself—few things pleased her more than to do this. She detailed her life in France, made a dramatic scene of her escape, the perils she had run, and brought up her narrative to the present. She told her plans, expounded her theories; and though Vaughan was perfectly able to perceive their absurdity, they did not seem absurd when uttered in her pretty words. He shuddered at the idea of the people by whom she was surrounded, but it would not be difficult to persuade her to give them their *congé*. He knew her well enough to be certain that she loved gaiety and excitement better than anything in the world, and the land of Bohemia had grown familiar enough to appear a little wearisome now.

There was nothing she concealed, even to the money anxieties, of which Darrell was delighted to hear.

"O life shall be a different thing henceforth to us both!" he cried, and burst into excited blank verse, which sounded sweeter to Nathalie than anything her most admired poets of the modern sensational school had ever sung.

Still, the interview convinced Vaughan that triumph would not be easy. The creature was an odd compound; tantalizing, bewitching. Darrell's head was in a whirl.

CHAPTER II.

A REVELATION.

VAUGHAN had been at home about four weeks. When December came, Congress commenced its session. He went to Washington for a few days. The morning after his return, Elizabeth learned that he had resigned his seat in the House—had been offered, and had accepted, one of the principal city offices connected with the Port.

She read this in a newspaper—the first tidings that reached her in regard to the matter. She had scarcely seen her husband alone since the evening of his arrival. She understood perfectly that it was neither a feeling of shame nor guilt which caused him to avoid her—not even anger; but a sentiment of dislike, so strong that in his nature it might grow rapidly into positive hatred.

She was by no means satisfied with her own conduct—she knew that in her appeal to his conscience she had meant for the best; but she

might have erred—might only have rendered matters worse so far as their present life was concerned. Yet had it been to do over again, she felt that she could have adopted no other line of action.

But the subject still kept its hold upon her mind; discouraged as she was, helpless indeed, she could not relinquish the idea in some way of aiding that unknown woman. She was not dead—this conviction remained. But to find her—even to take the least step towards so doing, appeared utterly impossible. Yet to sit quiet, be passive, was terrible—it seemed like spurning a human soul that called for help.

Between herself and her husband no further conversation could be held in regard to the affair. He had not even asked how she discovered the child, or where it was—thrust everything connected with the history aside, as he had done for years—perhaps did not even recognize it as specially the cause for the active animosity growing up in his soul towards herself.

Elizabeth was right in these conclusions. If he had put his feelings into words, she could not more accurately have understood them. The motives which had induced Vaughan to resign his seat in Congress and accept his

present position were twofold. A question was coming up during the present session upon which he desired to avoid giving either speech or vote—he saw clearly that it would be full of complications for the future.

Vaughan comprehended that the two great political parties were on the eve of a crisis out of which would inevitably spring new platforms —possibly an entirely fresh party. He had no mind to involve himself just now in any important decision, and the city office gave an admirable pretext for a withdrawal. But there was another inducement at work—that insane greed for money, which seemed only to increase with the growth of his fortune. The ramifications of the potent Ring extended to this office also. Vaughan knew that vast sums could be plundered—that they had been by his predecessor, without the slightest danger of incurring condemnation or even inquiry. So he found patriotic reasons for accepting the position, and made a brilliant speech, which was quoted in the journals from Maine to Georgia, and proceeded to plunge both hands into the public coffers without delay.

But occupied as he was, his passion for Nathalie La Tour became the ruling influence of his life—so absorbing, that in spite of his

;ard the future, it would
reckless measure which
ıded.
.ot ask or want this. She
\eitement that his society
ieved herself wildly in love
.sual, contented herself with
s, whatever the world might

:ne had been since Vaughan's
n, there was already plenty of
his more intimate associates,
ians were greatly enraged by
.ich his appearance effected in
ts.
solutely refused to have anything
he troop. He irreverently pro-
men a set of cads, and the women
halie was somewhat horrified at
xpressed contempt for these high-
tures, but she would have given up
more than their society for Darrell's

), he brought a different set of
.t her; men who dressed well, who
agreeable nonsense—had an odour
, a glint of *jeunesse dorée* in every-
said and did, which was delightful

to one side of her capricious, excitement-craving nature, however much in theory she might believe herself attached to soul-intercourse, aims for human progress, and other matters equally grand and poetical.

She formed the acquaintance also of two or three French actresses; and it was delicious to talk *chiffons* and have perfectly-dressed women by her side, and witty speeches and brilliant repartees flitting about, after so many weeks of aching eyes, caused by the ill-assorted colours with which the Bohemian sisters had vexed her spirit, and the constant strain upon her faculties from listening to long-winded poems that did not contain a line she could understand.

Her house was a convenience to Darrell; he could there indulge his love of high play without danger of discovery, and gather about him the brilliant, worthless men and women whose society he so thoroughly enjoyed. Therefore the Bohemians were furious, though wise enough not to ruin their cause by expostulations or complaints. They had the sense to comprehend that any interference would altogether deprive them of their Queen. And Nathalie was as ready as ever to give them money—to invite them to dainty suppers when

Vaughan was not there. Still, they felt themselves injured, and were the first to give her intimacy with this man a coarse name, and assail her reputation in every way possible.

Probably in neither of the two opposite little circles between which Nathalie vibrated was there a human creature (save one) who believed her other than a bad woman, employing the word as people do where feminine sins are concerned; as if there were only one sort of evil-doing which can entitle a member of the sex to that name.

Yet Vaughan's passion had met with no other reward than tenderness and sympathy—sympathy for the dismal, thwarted life whose dreariness he had painted to her in such glowing colours. The people about them believed that he was her lover, and Darrell felt himself ridiculous in his own eyes at the position in which he was placed. Nathalie would talk sentimental nonsense to any extent; she would weep at the cruel destiny which had separated them—enjoy a melo-dramatic scene, and rave and rant like a second Juliet; but she stopped there.

It was not calculation; it was not that she doubted the strength of her love; it was not respect for any law human or divine: she

gloried in believing herself above the reach of dull prejudices and senseless creeds. Still, neither Vaughan's passionate pleadings, her own weakness, nor the fear of losing him,—and he sometimes threatened her with that penalty, —were able to carry this woman, reckless and abandoned as the world believed her, one step beyond what Society calls "flirtation," and permits its devotees to indulge without scruple.

Nathalie could not argue the matter in her mind—she was too inconsequent, too frivolous; but the fact was there. The more she became convinced of the power of her own affection, the more completely heart and fancy went out toward this man, the more did she retreat from a position to which, theoretically, she boldly advanced in her books.

It was natural enough that no information should reach her whereby she could have connected Elizabeth Crauford with the tiresome, commonplace creature that she pictured Vaughan's wife to be. The Craufords were not a Knickerbocker family—Elizabeth had never lived in New York before her marriage; and among the men whom Darrell introduced to Nathalie there probably was not one acquainted with Mrs. Vaughan's maiden name. Of course there was no possibility of the two

women meeting, unless it might be at the theatre or opera, and this season Elizabeth seldom went to places of amusement.

At the time Nathalie's book gained its brief notoriety, Elizabeth, attracted by the name of her former acquaintance, had tried to read the story; but its re-hash of the Simonian doctrines was not even redeemed by the great genius which has given an unenviable celebrity to certain among the leading French writers, and Elizabeth flung it aside with a sigh, and a feeling of pity for the poor girl whom she had always remembered with kindness and sympathy.

So while Vaughan's infatuation became so well known that even Elizabeth's world caught up the story, she remained ignorant of Nathalie's presence in New York. She was not a person to whom her most intimate friends could bring a hint that might awaken any suspicion in her mind where her husband was concerned. Whatever her toubles, they were sacred. She would never, under any circumstances, be guilty of that most contemptible weakness a married man or woman can betray—the putting griefs into words, and permitting those about to share the pain by so much as an expression or look of sympathy.

The winter dragged by; it could be of no service to any human being to detail its records. Day by day the path grew harder, the darkness more intense. Elizabeth tried to cling to her faith; tried to endure; tried to silence the bitter wail of her heart, which moaned ceaselessly,—"How long, O Lord, how long!"

There were such employments as she could find for herself: the round of visits and society duties; and that was all she had to fill up her life.

At last some unwise writer in a prominent literary journal gave vent to a long diatribe against certain bad books, thus attracting to them the very attention which he declared unworthy any clean-minded man or woman. Foremost in the bitter criticism stood Nathalie La Tour's works—a brief account of her life—the desertion of her husband—her present residence in New York—her absurd title of "Queen of the Bohemians." The whole thing was as injudicious and uncalled for as possible, but by this means Elizabeth learned that Nathalie was near. The fact could be of no importance to her—she could do the woman no good. It was terrible to think of the harm the creature was perpetrating, sad to recollect how many good qualities she possessed, and to what un-

worthy use she had devoted them, but nothing beyond this regret was possible.

A great crisis in any life is, oddly enough, nine times out of ten, brought about by causes which seem the merest trifles.

Only the day after Elizabeth had been reading that review, and sorrowfully recalling the quiet weeks she and Nathalie had spent in the pretty Swiss valley, she received a letter from a friend in St. Louis, begging her to attend to some commissions at Madame Dirnier's, the famous *modiste* of the time. She was going out, so she drove at once to the establishment, as the business was connected with a wedding *trousseau*, and the articles must be sent immediately.

Madame Dirnier herself was condescending enough to attend to Mrs. Vaughan, and could not resist tempting the rich lady by the display of a marvellous dress of Point d'Alençon lace, which was just then driving half the society women of New York mad, not only by its loveliness, its costliness, but the history connected therewith. The robe had been manufactured for a royal marriage which never took place; it was purchased by an English Duke for a famous Parisian actress—famous rather for her beauty and adventures than her talent. Made-

moiselle P—— appeared once in the dress on the stage of the Gymnase. The next week she died suddenly—everybody must remember the story. Her creditors seized upon her effects, and this wonderful robe had been sent across the ocean as a matter of speculation, and the price set upon it was eighteen thousand dollars.

Elizabeth stood for awhile examining the dress, full of the fancies which its history must have roused in any imaginative mind. Then she half-smiled to perceive that she had gone leagues away from romance, and was simply wishing the thing could be converted into hard, prosaic cash.

One of the hospitals in which she was interested needed money sorely, and Darrell had absolutely refused to give her even a quarter of the sum she desired. He assured her that his available funds were at the time required in his affairs, and would listen neither to persuasion nor argument.

She finished her business and went home. A week later she received a telegram from St. Louis; there was some mistake in regard to the purchases—a shawl or a scarf or other important trifle had been forgotten. Would Mrs. Vaughan have the goodness to attend to

the matter at once? Of course she went immediately, wondering a little, as the most patient human being might have been excused for doing, that it had not occurred to the excited purchaser of wedding finery to telegraph directly to the *modiste*.

On her way out of the place she chanced to hear Madame informing certain customers, desirous of seeing the famous lace dress, that it had been sold that very morning; but Madame either could not or would not tell by whom it had been purchased.

She paid several necessary visits, which detained her so long that it was growing dusk when she returned. As she drove up to the house Vaughan was just entering; they had not met for two days. He spoke politely enough in the presence of the footman who opened the door, and they passed on into the library together, talking of the first trifle which suggested itself—the weather, the dampness. Both had that consciousness of the eager eyes and ears watching every look and gesture, which becomes habitual to all who attempt to keep a show of decency in their married lives, when cruel secrets lie under the surface. Not that the eyes and ears ever are deceived, or that the pretenders believe them to be; but somehow

playing the sorry farce is a kind of comfort—an absolute necessity, in fact, so long as people have a care to stretch the slightest shred of illusion across the loathsome reality.

Then another domestic Argus followed them into the room with such letters and cards as had arrived. Vaughan took his share, and, still under the control of the eyes, civilly handed Elizabeth's portion to her.

The man went out. Elizabeth sat down by the table, and read her notes—nothing of importance—then remained looking at Vaughan, as he stood by the fire-place busy with his letters.

"I shall not dine at home," he said, as he finished the perusal of his correspondence.

There was nothing surprising in this announcement; he seldom dined at home now-a-days unless there were invited guests. Whether he took his meals at his Club, whether he accepted invitations in which she had no share, Elizabeth never asked.

He was going out; she wanted to speak to him first. The managers of the hospital had written to her again—they were in great difficulty. She had been put to heavy expenses in various ways of late, and for the time had no further means in her possession. But it

occurred to her that Vaughan might be willing —if he would give her nothing—to advance the sum she required upon dividends which would come to her in the course of a few months. She had the matter much at heart, and could not forbear this last effort.

"Will you wait a moment, please?" she said nervously: she never could help being nervous when the necessity for any discussion in regard to money arose.

"What do you want?" he asked coldly.

He had crossed the room before she spoke. He stood on the opposite side of the table, and looked at her. How rapidly his face was changing; what a worn, strange look it had; how bright and feverish the eyes were! She noticed this with a certain wonder. It was something more than the effects of dissipation —it was the expression of a man consumed by some strong, overmastering passion! This rapid thought flitted through her mind even while answering his question.

"I wanted to speak to you again about that matter—"

"I told you I had no money to waste on such folly," he interrupted. "We live at the most expensive rate—forty thousand a year would not cover our expenses—I have got

mixed up in those companies. I can't give, and I won't."

So gladly, long since, she would have reduced their princely establishment to a more reasonable footing, but this Vaughan would not permit; he was lavish and reckless where show and luxury were concerned.

"I did not mean to ask you to give it," she replied quietly, with a certain chill disdain in her voice, for strive as she might against her faults she got nowhere near perfection. "I want to borrow it—I shall have funds enough in April. If you would get me the four thousand dollars upon some of my stocks—"

"O if you could ever come down enough from poetry to be practical, and show a little common sense!" he broke in. "Borrow—and a miserable sum like that? What do you suppose people would think? I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life—even from you!"

"You are right to call it a miserable sum," she replied, angry now, though her anger only betrayed itself in the cold scorn of her voice. "It is ridiculous too that I should have any difficulty in procuring it. You are right there also."

"Now you mean to talk about your accursed money, I suppose!" he exclaimed.

"I never have done so, I think," she said.

"But it is never out of your mind—never! A fine use you would make of it too if it were in your power! You keep a set of harpies about, and let them plunder you. It's just your vanity, your desire for notoriety, which is at the bottom—that, and a wish to annoy me."

She might have known nothing but strife and harsh words would come of her attempt; she told herself this. An angry retort rose to her lips; she set them hard together, and kept silence.

"Now it is perfectly useless to speak of this again! Give—give—why, I am always giving! My name is on every list of charities and public schemes—"

"When there is any glory to be gained by it," she added, as he paused.

Repentance came as soon as the bitter speech found utterance; but it was too late—the words were spoken.

"I did not mean to say that," she continued quickly, though it required a powerful effort to make the admission. "I beg your pardon! Don't let us quarrel over the matter! If I cannot have the money, there is an end."

"Always an end after you have done your

best to irritate me by sneers and taunts. Quarrel? Bah, I'll not waste my time by talking to you—I can spend it more pleasantly."

He went quickly out of the room, and presently she was summoned to her solitary repast. She was a great deal alone this winter; they gave frequent dinners—Vaughan had insisted upon a couple of balls; but she accepted only such invitations as it was impossible to refuse, and appeared in public just enough to avoid the reputation of singularity. Of late Vaughan had ceased to urge her to go out; he had grown fond of observing her peculiarities—of talking about them before others; and when he talked there was something in his face which fairly startled her. She had learned to know that Darrell Vaughan never did anything without motive, but what his reason for this could be, was beyond the reach of any supposition or fancy.

When she came back to the library, after dinner, one of the men was just entering with coals. He had expected to finish his task before she returned, but to-night she was too miserable even to go through the pretence of a meal.

"Is this of any consequence, ma'am?" she heard the man say, as he ended his string of excuses.

He had picked up a crumpled paper from the hearth and was holding it towards her. She opened it mechanically, and turned to the table, where a reading-lamp stood.

"Dear V,—I have bought the lace dress as you desired—sixteen thou. was the lowest figure; I have put it to your account, and I sent the robe at once to *la belle*. I am afraid, in spite of all our precautions, your part in the matter will leak out—"

That was what Elizabeth read on the scorched page—read so far without thinking. She did not look further; she crushed the paper in her hand, and stood there till the servant had left the room. Then she went back, and thrust the sheet between the bars of the grate. She recollected seeing Vaughan fling the letter into the fire—it must have rolled off upon the hearth.

He had bought the dress; had commissioned some friend to make the purchase in order that his own name might not appear: this was evident enough. Sixteen thousand dollars paid for that worthless thing, and he had refused her a quarter of the sum; had talked of embarrassments, of the cost at which they lived, as if her extravagance, her reckless tastes, were the cause! Oddly enough, she did not at

the time view the matter from the side which would have been prominent in the thoughts of most wives. Her soul had gone so far from any possibility of contact with this man to whom her life was bound, that jealousy had grown out of the question. As she sat by the fire, thinking, thinking, or walked up and down the room when some sort of physical exercise became a necessity,—she was not dwelling upon the object her husband had in that purchase, not wondering for whom the robe had been bought,—her reflections had gone back over the misery of her existence—its emptiness, its dreariness, its daily torture of pin-pricks, that deprived of all dignity even the current of dark tragedy which lay under.

The next day she did not see Vaughan. It chanced to be a night when they gave a dinner-party, and Elizabeth and her husband did not meet until their guests began to arrive. It proved a gay enough affair; Vaughan was in the highest spirits. It seemed odd to Elizabeth to sit there in the light and warmth—to talk, laugh, listen, and yet have a feeling of such unreality through it all; her heart shivering with a dreary chill.

Everybody had engagements; coffee was served, and the people took leave directly after,

Vaughan departing among the guests. There was no one left but an elderly gentleman with whom Elizabeth was a great favourite. He remained, perhaps because he understood something of the dreariness of her life and pitied her; perhaps because he had no engagement, and the drawing-room was bright and comfortable; anyway, he stayed. Conversation was an effort: Elizabeth suddenly recollected that it was the first night of a new opera troupe; she might invite her visitor to go with her to listen to the last acts, and so escape the need of talk.

They did not reach the theatre until the interlude between the third and fourth act. As they ascended the stairs into the upper lobby, a lady, accompanied by two gentlemen, brushed so close past Elizabeth that their dresses fairly touched. She had passed on before Mrs. Vaughan could catch a sight of her face, but the first glance at the costume would have been enough to make Elizabeth avoid doing so. The woman wore a moiré silk of a golden green, so vivid that it was as showy and *voyante* as scarlet could have been; over this swept the folds of the lace robe she had seen the week before—the robe purchased by her husband.

Mr. Howland was speaking: she heard herself answer; walked steadily on.

The curtain had risen when they entered the box. Elizabeth had not been six times in the house during the whole winter. Music was often a positive pain to her at this period. More than once she had been obliged to leave the theatre. It was as if a voice of unutterable anguish called to her in every measure the orchestra played, in every note that was sung, while some voice away down in her soul moaned in answer. It was fanciful—absurd; but she had grown full of fancies and absurdities, and could not struggle against them. It was the same to-night. She wondered why she had tried not to listen; would have risen and gone away, only that she determined to yield no further to a folly of which she felt ashamed.

The curtain fell. Mr. Howland perceived some friend to whom he wished to speak, and left her for a few minutes. Elizabeth had kept in the shadow of the box-draperies, and had asked her good-natured old friend to do so.

"I am stupid and dull," she said, "and I don't want any men to come and make me talk. You don't mind my stupidity, but I can't trust to other people's leniency."

And the elderly bachelor thought her smile the saddest sight he had seen in many a day, and, knowing Darrell Vaughan tolerably well,

wondered why this beautiful creature should have met with so dismal a fate. For she was very beautiful, this weary Elizabeth! The great eyes were dark and soft as deep waters where the stars are shining. Her face had lost the first roundness and bloom of youth, young though she was, but hers had always been a countenance whose beauty depended more on expression and delicacy of feature than upon its colouring. She appeared older than her age —one would have said a woman of twenty-six or seven. It was a countenance that possessed a language not easy to understand—untranslatable to many who would have decided that it looked haughty, cold, and unsympathetic. But those were the fools and blind—it was all written on that melancholy face. The whole record of her disappointed youth was there; the blighted hopes, the thwarted dreams, the controlled passion and imperviousness, the effort at patience—ay, even to the earnest faith which alone supported her, and gave to eyes and brow the marvellous light which struck the dullest with a vague wonder as to what its signification might be.

After Mr. Howland had gone she sat trying to occupy her mind with any trifle that she could call up. A passing excitement in a box

nearly opposite attracted her attention—several men entering at once—laughter and conversation louder than one would have expected in such a place.

In the front of the *loge* sat a lady—the gleam of jewels on her neck and in her hair. She was fluttering a fan; her hands moved in pretty gestures, which reminded Elizabeth of the women in Southern climes across the sea.

Something in the figure, the attitude, suddenly struck her with a strange sense of familiarity. Her opera-glass lay beside her on the cushion; she took it up, and from the safe screen of the curtains looked out again; then her hand dropped slowly into her lap.

She had seen Nathalie La Tour, talking, laughing, full of animation — prettier, more bewitching than of old. But this was not all, the rich lace dress she wore was the robe that had brushed against Elizabeth a little while before in the lobby—the dress purchased by Darrell Vaughan only the day previous.

The door of the box opened again. Elizabeth lifted the glass anew and looked across the house.

Vaughan had entered the *loge*. The other men made way for him. Nathalie half rose from her seat, then sank back. She had grown

singularly quiet; the animation of her manner, the Southern gestures, all these had left her. But Elizabeth saw her face—saw the eyes that still had a sort of childish eagerness in their depths—saw the smile which brightened the features into positive beauty; and she knew that Nathalie La Tour loved the man.

Elizabeth turned away; she could not bear to look again. The first conscious feeling in her mind, the first tangible thought, was a sincere pity for this woman, whatever she might have become—pity!

There are many men, there may be women, though I think few, who will declare this unnatural, but it was all that Elizabeth felt—pity! She was not even thinking of the sin, the shame—positively not remembering that she was Darrell Vaughan's wife—only recollecting what Darrell Vaughan was; and she pitied this ill-brought-up, misdirected creature, whose evil destiny had brought her to so sad a pass.

Presently other reflections came as she leaned back in the shadow, hearing vaguely the pleasant murmur that rose about—a gaiety and excitement in which she had no part—which only surged faintly to her ears as she sat there alone, just as the pleasant tumult of

other lives, the lives of happy, ordinary people, made itself audible through the dreary stillness of her own; coming only like an echo—nothing real, nothing which she could grasp and hold fast—nothing she could claim in all the interests and enjoyments which were so freely granted to them.

Other reflections followed, harsh enough, angry enough, but this had been the first. Elizabeth could not close her eyes to facts so patent. Purity is not innocence; she was a woman and a wife, and there was only one interpretation to what she had seen. The paragraphs of that harsh review of Nathalie La Tour's works and life recurred to her. Elizabeth understood now the allusions they contained; she knew too that Darrell Vaughan was the man indicated in the record of the person "who had so bitterly disappointed the Bohemians by almost depriving them of the Queen they had selected."

She could scarcely feel shocked; first and last she had borne too much. Blow after blow had fallen with such rapidity, that she seemed incapable of poignant sensations. Only cold and sick with a strange feeling of abasement and degradation—as if she had been unconsciously dragged down a flowery path into a

noisome pit, and saw herself lying there bound hand and foot, her garments stained, impurity and loathsomeness all about her, and the noble face which had lured her on suddenly turned into the gibing countenance of a fiend that mocked at her.

What to do, which way to turn! What was duty? How far did vows and promises bind the soul? What could be expected of her? Was there no mercy among men—not even in the God she had prayed to and believed in at the worst?

But the door opened and Mr. Howland returned. The curtain had risen again without her knowing it; the tenor and soprano were singing one of the most beautiful duets of the whole opera—she had not heard a note.

The old bachelor stood quiet behind her chair, believing her absorbed by the music. The sound of his entrance brought her back to the present. She caught the crash of the instruments, the tones of the united voices; it was like heavenly music striking her ears from the impenetrable distance—flinging its echoes down into the black depth where she lay helpless.

It grew unbearable; she could not remain. She rose—caught up her cloak.

"I must go," she said; "take me home—please take me home."

The kind old man obeyed without a question, conscious that she suffered, wishing he had power to aid, but feeling that in the pass to which life had brought this woman, not even the relief of human sympathy could be offered or received.

CHAPTER III.

HIS VICTIM.

It is deep in December. The snow lies thick in the streets of Moysterville; the mountains rise about it grand and awful, looking like gigantic icebergs towering above the white level of some frozen sea.

Out beyond the town stands a great pile of gloomy buildings, with walls almost as thick and strong as those of a mediæval fortress, with dreary courts, and dark passages, and grated windows. Everything is stern, and heavy, and grim, as if the place itself had grown sullen under the burden of sin and crime which makes up the record of those who from the four corners of the earth have finally met here in dismal companionship.

In a long room on an upper floor—a bare, desolate place, though neither cold nor ill lighted—sits a row of women, each bending silently over her appointed task. They are binding shoes. Not one of them appears to work slowly

or unwillingly. The skilful fingers fly just as rapidly along the tedious seams even if the eyes of the task-master chance to be withdrawn for a little. Probably to each one of the ghost-like company the work is a solace. They all look ghost-like someway, even the strongest. There are a score of them—more than that; and though, perhaps, no two resemble each other, there is a dreadful general likeness running through the whole group, not arising entirely from the similarity of dress or occupation. One finds it difficult to tell in what the resemblance consists; but it is there—one feels it: it is a part of the shadow which affects the very walls themselves—that shadow of sin and crime.

Down at the further end of the room sits a woman who seems, no matter how diligent the rest may be, to work twice as fast as they. She sits perfectly motionless, save for the swift movements of her fingers—sits so for hours together: and yet, paradoxical as it sounds, the apathetic stillness has no sense of quiet in it. You expect each instant to see her spring like a panther—rush out of that immobility into an insane fury. The guardians used to have this feeling in regard to her: the women, her fellow-prisoners, have it always—they catch themselves furtively watching her day after

day. But the outbreak never comes. She is a model of orderly conduct, though she never receives praise for it. Nobody can help feeling there is something dangerous in the creature—no more sense of security in her stillness than there would be in that of the panther of which she reminds one.

These years of imprisonment have not aged her face. It is paler, thinner, than it was the day it looked at Darrell Vaughan out of the prison dock, but it is the same face still. The eyes are a little deeper set, a little more sombre, as if the inner fire which lights them were slowly consuming the soul that feeds the flame. More hopeless than the countenance was that day it could not grow, but there is a certain strength and fixedness of purpose and will which it lacked then. This may come from the fact that for so long she has been unable to reach either narcotics or stimulants, but it does not seem as if that was wholly the reason. She looks as though some strong determination were keeping her alive—as if it would continue to do so through all failure of bodily power; some work to accomplish, some vengeance to take—who shall say?—and perhaps, after all, none of these.

She has never spoken a harsh word to one

of her companions, and yet among the whole set there is not a woman but fears her. She seldom talks at all; that may be at the bottom of their dread. During the hours of recreation the others chatter among themselves; tell stories of their misdoings; scoff or are penitent according to their natures; but she never opens her lips in regard to herself. Several of them know about her, the old nickname clings to her still, but the boldest there has no inclination to question Milady, or rouse the nameless spirit they have sometimes seen in her eyes, though it finds no utterance. The rest have friendships and enmities, as their innocent sisters might in the ordinary walks of life; but Milady has, apparently, no more feeling for their memories or their pains than if she had been a ghost. The rest have found certain little interests which have a pathetic side to them. One woman pets a lame chicken that lives in the covered court where they go for exercise in the winter; one has a familiar in the shape of a spider that dwells in a chink of the window-sill near her seat in the work-room. Not a soul among them that does not yet show human capabilities and needs just in those trivialities—all except Milady. Nobody ever saw her moved but once, that was soon after her

arrival. Those who were here when she came still relate the story to each new-comer who takes her place among the band of hopeless ones.

They were all out in the walled enclosure where they walked at certain hours during the pleasant weather. Milady was sitting as usual, dumb and apathetic, on a stone in the middle of the little misery of a garden the women were allowed to cultivate. Suddenly a child of one of the keepers—a sick baby, being carried up and down in the sunshine the other side of the wall—was heard to cry. The next thing the woman saw was Milady on her feet—rushing to the wall—beating her head and hands against it in a mad frenzy—shrieking unintelligible words, as if she had lost even the power of human speech.

The keepers came and carried her away. Weeks, a good many of them, passed before she appeared among the women again. It was known that she had been ill—raving in a brain fever, from which the doctors had no idea she could recover. But she lived and came back, more still and taciturn than before, and from that time until the present there has been no change.

Here she is in her place to-day, and, as

usual, the other women find themselves, every now and then, watching her. There always seems to them something unfamiliar in her appearance; they never grow accustomed to it as they have done to each other.

Suddenly a door opens noiselessly—there is a horrible quiet about everything that happens in this place. The warden enters, and he and the keeper of the room whisper together for a few seconds. Milady is the only creature there not interested, to a certain degree excited—the slightest event, if it be only a footstep at an unusual time, is a matter of importance to these poor souls. But Milady hears nothing—does not lift her head.

Then the keeper calls,—"Number 37!"

Every woman starts except she who owns the number. Milady is "No. 37." She looks up slowly; the keeper speaks again. She lays her work on the bench in an orderly, methodical fashion, and walks the length of the room, neither interested nor excited, though her fellow-prisoners are ready to spring out of their seats and cry aloud from sheer nervous agitation.

She moves slowly down the chamber; the keeper motions her to follow the warden; the door closes. Milady has passed out of sight,

and not one of those women, who have been her companions so long, will ever see her face again in this world.

She follows her conductor along a passage which her feet have not traversed since the day she entered the prison, down a flight of stairs, and into an apartment where several gentlemen are seated. She stands quite still near the door; not looking at any of the group, not conscious even that their eyes are fixed upon her. Somebody is speaking—she does not notice that he addresses her. The warden, who is near, nudges her elbow lightly, and she hears him whisper,—"Why don't you listen?"

If she has had any thought at all since she left the work-room, it has been that she is to be removed to another prison—no possibility beyond this has crossed her mind.

But the gentleman is reading a paper aloud; he is reading a proclamation of pardon from the Governor of the State for the woman who has no name, even in the prison records, except "Milady."

They are all looking at her; the measured voice has ceased to read; there is an instant's silence. They see Milady sway to and fro and put her hands to her head. They think she is

going to faint, and the doctor, who is among the group, comes towards her. But she only drops slowly into a chair which is behind her, and sits motionless, with her hands still pressed to her head. They bring some water, but she pushes the glass away. The chaplain feels it his duty to improve the occasion. Several times during the past years he has addressed words of exhortation to Milady, but he might as well have talked to the great door of the prison for any response he received, any sign that his warnings or counsels were heard.

He tells her now that she ought to be very grateful to God—and the Governor. He has not meant to put the two so close together in his speech, but Milady has glanced suddenly up, and her eyes have startled him so that he makes this blunder. The other men forget to smile—they are watching Milady too. So the chaplain begins again; he means to advise her to lead a different life, to employ the years which may be left in repentance for the past and endeavours to make her peace with her Creator. To his utter confusion, he hears himself, instead of saying a single word he intends, just repeating that unfortunate error. But he cannot stop; once more he has advised her to be grateful to God—and the Governor.

He retreats, and whispers to the person nearest him,—

"I think she's not right in her mind."

If he were to follow out his full thought, he would suggest a similar doubt in regard to himself. He has been a finger-post to heaven for a quarter of a century, and it is a horrible humiliation to have made such an utter failure when he has expected to be unusually impressive and eloquent.

There is a little further conversation among the gentlemen, then they all go out except one. Launce Cromlin is left alone with the woman whom he has at last succeeded in liberating from her unjust imprisonment. The case will not attract any especial attention. The pardon of a convict by a new Governor is too common for the newspapers to do more than make a brief paragraph in regard to it. The new Governor is popular too. A few of the opposition journals may sneer, and observe that it would be satisfactory to the public mind to have some explanation of this extraordinary step; but in fact the public mind will be slightly exercised in regard to the matter. Events of a startling nature follow each other too rapidly in this age for anybody even among those present at Milady's trial to

remember much about it after this lapse of time.

So Cromlin is left alone with the woman. He is not labouring under the same difficulty as the parson; he has no desire to improve the occasion; his heart is full of pity and sympathy. He goes up to her as she sits leaning forward in the chair, her head drooped, her hands crossed over her knees.

"Do you remember me?" he asks.

She starts at his voice; stares wildly at him for an instant.

"You came to see me in the jail," she half whispers.

"Yes; I am Launce Cromlin—you would not believe it then."

She only looks stupefied—vacant.

"You hardly realize it yet," he says, "but you will presently. You are free—you can go away as soon as you like."

"Go away?" she repeats, with a sort of dull wonder in her voice.

"Yes; the formalities are all settled—the order is signed—you are just as free to go as I."

She gives him one glance, then drops her head again.

"Ten years," he hears her mutter; "ten years!"

She presses her hands to her forehead; he knows that she is conscious of the confusion in her faculties, and is struggling to right her brain. He perceives what might, perhaps, have escaped the chaplain, in spite of his wisdom: the creature is still so dazed that she can only think the ten years of her allotted imprisonment have expired. She knows it is not so, yet she can comprehend in no other way the fact that she is free.

"You have been pardoned," Launce says. "That was the meaning of the paper you heard read. It is more than four years since you came here."

"What do they let me out for now?" she asks suddenly. Then, before he can speak, a new thought comes, and finds utterance—so puerile, so unexpected, that if the chaplain were here he would have no doubt whatever of her helpless insanity, "I hadn't finished binding the shoes."

But she is not mad; it is only that her mind fixes instinctively on this petty, familiar thought, just to steady itself. You shall read in the records left by men who have spent half a life in prison, that some similar slight recollection has been all they were capable of when the news of freedom came.

"You will find some other work to do," Launce says gently. "You will be glad to work, will you not?—to have a home, and be taken care of, and helped on your way?"

Again she looks at him in dull surprise.

"Say that over," she half whispers; "say it slowly."

Launce repeats the words.

"I can't make it mean anything," she mutters, in a still lower tone. "Sometimes I've heard the women say I was crazy—do you think I am?"

"No; it is only that the news has come upon you suddenly; you cannot realize yet that you are free—completely free."

"I thought I dreamed it!"

She says this, and sits looking helplessly about. If he can find some strong impulse upon which to fasten her attention, the mist will pass, and her faculties begin to act.

"You had a child," he says; "you will want to find her."

A sudden spasm distorts her features—her face turns a deathly bluish white—she groans aloud, and falls back in her chair, pressing her hand to her bosom. Launce does not summon assistance; he brings some water; forces her to swallow a little, and gradually her breath

returns. But Launce has medical knowledge enough to know what the attack means—the woman has heart disease.

Her wasted hands twist themselves together in her lap—a faint dew gathers in her eyes—the dull cloud lifts, and a strange gleam of the old beauty comes back to her face.

"The child, the child!" The words are almost a shriek. She presses her hands hard against her mouth and struggles for composure.

"I shan't go to her," she says. "If the child's alive, it's with a good woman—I've no business near her."

"Some time you will go," Launce replies. "You are young yet; you will try all your life to redeem the past, and you will succeed."

Instantly her face becomes hopelessly sullen.

"I'll strike you if you say that again!" she cries, with a return of the old ferocious spirit.

"That is very silly," says Launce. "I shall think you are crazy if you talk in that way."

"O yes," she sighs with a sort of childish penitence. Absurd as the word sounds applied to a creature like her, it is the only one that answers. "I forgot. I almost thought I was in the Court again. It seems a hundred years, and yet it is all like one day! Four years—did

you say four years? Come here—come close—I want to whisper."

"What is it?" Launce asks, bending his head.

"Does he know—did he let me out?"

"You had better not ask any questions to-day," he replies. "I am going to take you away from here now."

"Shall I be shut up again?" she demands apathetically.

"No—try to understand! You are as free as I am! If you will let me, I will take you where you will be kindly treated—where you can rest, and when you are strong and able to work, something will be found for you to do."

"Let me think—let me alone for a minute—my head turns!"

She sits for a few seconds with her hands clasped over her forehead. Presently she speaks again. "And you were Launce Cromlin all the time; I believed it after you'd gone!"

"You had heard my name then?"

"What do you want to help me for?" she continues, without noticing his question. "Do you know I'm the worst creature in the world? You've been in San Francisco—didn't you hear about Milady? That's me—I'm the woman."

"I know I am very sorry for you," Launce answers; "that is all you need care about now."

"Darrell Vaughan's cousin!" she mutters. "Darrell Vaughan's cousin! And he asks if I'd ever heard his name!"

She laughs, though she shivers from head to foot.

"Never mind about him," Launce says, and, noticing the shudder of fear, hastens, if possible, to strengthen her dread of the man, and thus keep her from taking any step toward exposing him, if such possibility be in her power. "I would advise you never even to mention his name to any human being—don't forget."

"I won't," she whispers. "He'd shut me up—he'd find ways and means—I'll be too wise for that."

An expression of such insane cunning brightens the dreary darkness of her eyes, that Launce begins to think her faculties really disordered—perhaps hopelessly so.

"You must not keep me any longer," he observes; "I have a carriage waiting to take you away."

"He'll not find me—he's not where we are going?"

"No; he is thousands of miles off. If you keep quiet he will not even know you are out of prison."

"I will," she whispers; "I will! You are Launce Cromlin—you 'll hide me safe."

"You will be perfectly safe! There is a good woman where we are going who will be very kind to you."

"Where is it?" she asks quickly.

"To the house my uncle lived in—"

He stops, more puzzled than ever, absolutely startled by the look of triumph, of savage joy which kindles in her eyes.

"The house his uncle lived in!" she mutters. "O yes, he 's Launce Cromlin—I believed it after he was gone."

"When I went to see you that time you would not tell me why you visited my uncle," Launce says. "You seemed to think that Darrell and I—"

She puts out her hand to interrupt him; draws a heavy breath; the cunning, frightened look comes over her face again.

"Who says I went to see the old man?" returns she irritably. "He 's dead and can tell nothing. I don't know you—do you hear? —I don't know anything about you or him either!"

Launce cannot decide whether she is in mortal terror of Darrell or half-mad, but it is useless to question her further. Indeed, the old shrinking has come back to his mind; he does not want her to make revelations—they could avail nothing. He knows enough—more than enough! The past is dead—let its secrets lie; their exposure could only fling an added bitterness over his soul.

A faint groan from Milady rouses him out of his reverie. He sees that she has grown terribly pale, and presses her hand anew on her heart.

"You suffer," Launce says.

"I'm used to it. I never spoke about it; somehow it's worse to-day," she replies brokenly.

A slight convulsion passes over her countenance; she groans again, and this time sinks back in her chair completely insensible.

Launce summons the doctor and the matron. It is a long while before they can restore Milady to consciousness. After that, they are obliged to put her to bed, and it is evening before she is able to leave the prison. At Launce's request another gown is provided for her. He thinks that to find herself divested of the penitentiary uniform may help her

to realize that what has happened is indeed real, for on waking from her swoon she seems more bewildered than ever.

She allows them to do what they please, asking no questions.

They get her into the carriage—the great gates open and close behind her, but she does not appear to heed. Her strength seems to have given way completely—she has not even vitality enough left to understand that she is free.

Launce takes her to the villa, as had been agreed upon, and places her under good Mrs. Simpson's care. Neither Launce nor Mr. Carstoe has stayed at the house since their return to Moysterville. They have lodgings in the town; to both of them it has seemed impossible to sleep under that roof.

Milady is ill for more than a week, and the fiery-haired Simpson nurses her as tenderly as if she were the purest and greatest lady in the land. It is enough for her to know that Launce and Mr. Carstoe are sorry for the woman. She asks no questions, and has no time. There is only one servant in the house, a new-comer, who does not even know who the sick woman is that has been brought there, so Moysterville has no idea that Milady is at hand, and, as I

prophesied, Milady's pardon attracts slight attention in any way.

Mr. Carstoe has been very busy since his return, setting Vaughan's matters in complete order. He is ready now to resign the agency. He has lately received a letter from Darrell, expressing surprise at his hasty departure, dwelling lightly on Carstoe's desire that he would appoint a new agent, adding certain insinuations about ingratitude, and winding up by the offer of an increase of salary and percentage, as if he supposed that would settle the question.

So Mr. Carstoe has now to write that he has resigned his position, put Mr. Vaughan's affairs in the hands of a well-known lawyer, and proposes before long to leave California. It is difficult to frame this epistle. Poor Carstoe is so oppressed by the awful secret which he holds in regard to the man he once loved and honoured, that he has a positive sensation of guilt, from which, argue as he may, he cannot free himself.

He is talking of these things with Launce as they sit in his room this evening—the tenth since Milady's liberation.

The woman is much better—able to sit up. They have been to the villa to-night and seen

her. She is taciturn, but not sullen. Launce thinks her mind quite restored, though he fears the effect of any excitement, and has been careful to talk of the most ordinary matters; indeed, he has ceased to think she could throw any light upon the forgery of the cheque. Her visits to his uncle might have had a merely personal motive—a desire to revenge herself on Darrell. Some terrible revelation she brought with her, that is certain. Some strong fear of her disturbed Darrell, that is equally sure, else he would never have devised the plan which he carried out with such unwavering cruelty. But she dreads him too much now to open her lips. The long confinement and this mortal disease, which the doctors are certain must end her life in a few years, have tamed the old savage spirit and broken the obstinate will. Launce has no fear for Vaughan where she is concerned.

To-morrow he is to leave Moysterville, but this fact has not been mentioned to Milady. He proposes to visit New Orleans for awhile before returning to New York.

"I think everything is arranged for the poor creature," he says to Carstoe. "Mrs. Simpson will take care of her until she is strong again, then she can go to the place we have found—

she will be quite safe. She can earn large wages and lay up all the money."

Milady embroiders in the most wonderful manner in silk and gold thread. Weak as she is, she has given them proofs of her skill, and Launce has already procured her an extensive order for the working of altar-cloth and robes needed by a Romish church in San Francisco.

"Later, I dare say she will want to find her child, but I think there is no danger of her falling back into her old life."

"I don't agree with you about her being altogether right in her mind," Mr. Carstoe observes. "She 's quiet enough, though; and indeed I think the poor thing can't last long anyway."

"So much the better, certainly. It is the best wish one could make for her."

"Yes. They must have a plan up yonder for setting the errors of this world right," Mr. Carstoe replies thoughtfully. "It 's an odd muddle, Launce Cromlin, but it 's good to hold fast to that belief."

"I should think so," returns Launce, with his pleasant smile. "Well, Carstoe, we 've been able to set some part of a great wrong right also."

"Yes, thank God! I couldn't rest—I felt as

if I should never sleep while there was a doubt. If there had been no other way, I must have spoken—let the whole out."

"I don't feel that we have anything to do with his part now," Launce says. "The woman is free; after all, she is better off than she was before. But come, we 've argued the whole question more than enough. We shall never be certain, either of us, whether we are doing right. But we can't expose Darrell; nothing but the sternest necessity, the impossibility of helping her without, would have made us. We may both be wrong; it has to rest so, anyway."

Then they get round to the question of the business, and the letter which must be sent to Vaughan.

"I 've written it over three times," sighs Mr. Carstoe. "I suppose it will do as well as anything. I want you to hear it."

"I am listening," Launce says.

"First I wrote that I was not strong, was tired of California, and wanted to go East," Mr. Carstoe interrupts himself in the reading to observe; "but I couldn't tell any untruths, or make any excuses; there 's the fact and he must be satisfied with it."

"You have decided to go, however?"

"Yes; I shall take what I have saved and

go to live in Albany again; it was home to me as a boy. I have a chance of employment—a book-keeper's place. I shall do very well. Now let me read the rest of the letter."

"It is all that is necessary," Launce says, when he finishes.

"Do you suppose he will suspect that I have found out anything?"

"If he happens to hear of this poor woman's release, he may; but he will hold his peace, of course; you will never be asked for reasons."

"I hope I shall never see him again," sighs Mr. Carstoe. "I don't think that he can persecute Milady any further."

"Of course not; he would not dare if he felt inclined to try. The whole matter is at an end. We shall never even know why he invented that infernal plot for shutting her up."

"I did think she knew something—had some hold upon him; but there seems no chance of that."

"No. Perhaps it was only that he was afraid of her watching him, following to Europe and preventing his marriage; that seems more probable than anything else."

"You have never questioned her?"

"She is frightened at the mere mention of

his name—at least it seems more fright than anger. But I don't want to know, Carstoe; it could do no good! Leave him and his secrets alone. God have mercy on him! is all I can say."

"God have mercy on him!" repeats the other man. "But the judgment, the retribution, it must fall sooner or later; it never fails."

"That is in God's hands too," says Launce, "and we must leave it there."

"Only when I think of his wife! Ah, that's the strangest consequence of the law—that the innocent must suffer with the guilty."

Launce lifts his hand warningly; he has grown very pale, and his voice trembles as he answers,—

"Don't, please; I have to put that part out of my mind."

He rises and walks up and down the room for some time in silence. Mr. Carstoe comprehends what he suffers, and is conscience-stricken at having allowed his thought to find voice. There has scarcely been a mention of Elizabeth during all these anxious weeks; never a syllable of confidence has passed between the two; but Carstoe, in his odd fashion, understands what a beautiful dream, what a golden hope was stricken out of Launce Cromlin's life the

day he read—O years since—the news of his cousin's marriage.

Presently Launce comes back to his seat, and the two talk of other matters—of a future meeting in New York—of Launce's long-deferred journey to Europe, which will take place in the spring. There is always a solace in work to a mind like his, and no pain would be insupportable to Launce as long as he feels that he is not wasting the precious weeks and months which grow so rapidly into years. There is so much he wants to accomplish—not just for Fame's sake, though he prizes that as any man ought; but to feel when the end comes and the great portals open into another sphere, a new phase in the endless cycle of existence, that he has not played ill his part here, not neglected such gifts, such opportunities of usefulness as this earthly career may have offered in its course.

It is late at night before they separate, and each goes to his bed-chamber; each, as he lays his head on his pillow, feeling a sense of relief in recollecting that the anxieties which were so incessant and so torturing during that long sea-voyage have been set at rest—Darrell Vaughan's victim is free. Not a night since Launce brought her forth from those dreary walls, but this thank-

fulness has been the last waking thought in the minds of both these men; the last but one —always another comes after—a petition to God for mercy on a woman almost more to be pitied than this outcast—on her whose fate is indissolubly knit to Darrell Vaughan's.

Out in the villa too all is quiet and still. Mrs. Simpson sleeps heavily after so many days and nights of watching. Milady is quite herself again; able to leave her chamber—to walk about; she will soon be as strong as ever.

In her room only burns a light. The woman is standing by a window, and looking out into the star-lit sky. The face, wasted and worn, with a mere spectre of its wonderful beauty still clinging about it, has recovered a force and energy which it has not exhibited for years. She may be silent, she may shroud her features in Launce Cromlin's presence under a veil of passivity, which makes him doubt whether she feels or remembers anything with keenness; but this woman thinks clearly, consecutively; and her brain is able to weave its plans—her will to carry them out.

She waits in her chamber till the little clock on the mantel strikes midnight. It would seem

a signal she had given to her own soul. As the last chime dies she takes up the lamp, passes noiselessly down the stairs, and enters the library.

Of what is she thinking as she stands gazing straight before her into the shadows? Of the day she held her last meeting with old Mr. Vaughan in this room? Of a later meeting here with the nephew on the night that Mr. Vaughan died?

The face tells nothing; the very eyes look dead and cold.

At one end of the apartment stands the cabinet which has been so many times diligently searched since Edgar Vaughan's death. She goes to it, and sets the lamp on the floor by its side. The cumbrous thing—almost as large as an organ—is a mass of wonderful carving and ornament. Four immense scroll-shaped legs support the ancient affair, which the strength of a dozen men would hardly suffice to lift.

Milady, on her knees, holds the light close to a panel near the bottom of the cabinet. She takes out of her pocket a long knitting-needle—the restless Simpson yesterday missed that needle from her work, and is dreaming about it at this moment. After several trials, Milady

succeeds in pushing the slender steel far up under a mass of carved flowers. The panel flies out and discloses a drawer, in which lie folded papers. These Milady seizes, and hides in her bosom, muttering,—"I saw him open it! I thought afterwards I was crazy to hide the papers here—but they have kept safe—they have kept safe."

Then, noiseless and ghost-like, she creeps back to her chamber, and the old house remains silent as a grave.

Two days elapse before she learns that Launce Cromlin is gone, but she asks few questions, though she looks troubled and disappointed at first. When she is alone again she presses her hand to her bosom, and the paper hidden there crackles under her touch.

"It doesn't matter," she whispers; "they are safe."

She goes soon afterwards to the home Launce has provided for her—a place where she will be perfectly secure should Darrell Vaughan make any attempts to discover her whereabouts.

Weeks go by—drift on, to spring. Even Mr. Carstoe has left California. One day news comes to Mrs. Simpson that Milady has

disappeared. She had taken the sum gained by her work—and never woman toiled as Milady did—and is gone.

Mrs. Simpson is troubled and anxious, but is obliged to wait, for Mr. Carstoe has not yet sent her his address, and she does not know where to send information either to him or Launce Cromlin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIANT'S CASTLE.

It was a beautiful February day; every trace of snow had disappeared; the air was balmy and soft, with promises of spring—promises which the fickle goddess would be sure to forget by the time March arrived; as in the matter of pledges and vows she resembles the order of human beings who "protest too much."

But it was lovely weather, and useless to project one's soul into the future; better to enjoy it, as we do the pleasant mood of some friend troubled by an uncertain temper, without questioning.

Mrs. Murray seldom got out of the house, except when obliged to go to the shop which gave her work. To-day, however, they persuaded her that it would be delightful to undertake a long-promised journey to the upper part of town, where lived an old Scotch-woman whom they visited two or three times

a year. The street cars—that blessed modern invention which puts "a carriage-and-pair" at the service of the poor and ailing — set them down within a short distance of their destination.

But to Meg the ride was the chief pleasure, for she found slight entertainment in their hostess's room after she had exhausted the pictorial resources of an old Bible, and worn out her patience trying to persuade the misanthropic black cat, who dwelt on the warmest corner of the hearth, to play with her.

"Meg," said Mrs. Murray at last, noticing, with her usual thoughtfulness, that the child began to look weary of her efforts to amuse herself, "I'm thinking puss is like Mrs. MacLean and me, my woman, she's outlived her playing days. But ye may walk in the square if ye'll tak' good heed.

"And may I go over to the Reservoir?" asked Meg, ready, like any other human being, to demand an ell when an inch was granted.

"Yes; if ye'll be sure to mind the carriages at the crossings. Ye'll be back at the end of the hour?"

Meg promised, and decided to leave the square for a future day, when the trees should be in leaf, and flowers in blossom that could be

looked at, even if touching them must remain an unattainable bliss. To walk about under the shadow of the lofty walls that shut in the Reservoir was a pleasure which made these visits to Mrs. MacLean something to dream of in advance and long afterwards, where Meg was concerned. The great mass of masonry might look prosaic enough to most people; it entranced Meg as much as ever a ruined castle on the Rhine did a poet. Jean Murray, unconscious as she was of possessing imaginative gifts, had a rare talent for story-telling. Meg never went to sleep without a wonderful story. She was familiar with all the fairy-tales that have been sacred history to children for centuries, and believed them just as implicitly as those out of the Bible which were reserved for Sundays. Indeed, she somewhat confused matters, as many a small personage has done before, and often pictured one of her pet elfin kings in Joseph's gorgeous coat of many colours, and mixed up Fairy-land and Eden in a fashion that would have horrified Aunt Jean's natural enemies—"the district visitors." And almost the next best thing to finding the road to the kingdom of the fairies—a feat Meg by no means despaired of if she could only get fairly out into the broad, green, tree-shadowed country of

which she had caught occasional glimpses on bright summer-days—were these expeditions to the Reservoir. Meg had no doubt whatever that these great walls hid a notable giant who figured in one of Aunt Jean's narratives —a giant who bore no family likeness to the generality of those wicked old fellows that infest the realm of Fable. This giant was as kind and gentle as he was strong, and helped princes to their rights, and screened beautiful princesses from their foes, showered costly gifts upon good children with a lavish hand, and was altogether the sort of giant one would be very glad to meet and propitiate.

So Meg gained the broad, quiet street—walked on past Sixth Avenue—past Broadway, and came in sight of the giant's castle. When she was tired of staring up at the frowning height, and fancying that she heard the sound of the giant's tread and the voice of the Princess Thelusia from within, there was a convenient deep doorway on the Fifth Avenue side where she could sit and watch the carriages and the horsemen dash past, and the beautifully-dressed ladies saunter along the side-walk, and find the real world about her nearly as marvellous as the fair Wonder-Land familiar to her childish fancies.

She was to have a whole hour in the shadow of the giant's castle—and an hour is a lengthy period either for pleasure or pain at Meg's age. The great clock in the church-tower farther down the avenue had struck two as she neared the walls. Meg had so long to live before that hoarse voice would call again, that it was not necessary to think about its warning. She was a conscientious little soul, however, and as soon as the first chime sounded would have set out on her return, even if the giant and the princess, the elf in Joseph's gorgeous coat, and the whole train of brilliant creatures had appeared in a body and tempted her to remain.

After Meg had been there a great while, and had begun to think she must listen for the bell, (as if one of the seven sleepers himself could have failed to be roused by its brazen voice, that always sounds so angry and fiendish one is inclined to believe the unfortunate dissenting chapel where it lives possessed of a devil!) a carriage drove up the avenue, and stopped in front of Meg's doorway.

A very pretty lady descended—almost as pretty, Meg thought, as the one who had been so kind the day Sally Baines's cat got her into difficulty, and who had several times since then visited the little rooms in Minetta Lane.

"You need not wait," Meg heard the lady say to the coachman; "I shall walk awhile before going home. Be at the house in time to take me to the theatre."

A very elegant lady, in a rich black dress Meg knew to be velvet, and with a bonnet so beautiful that the child immediately appropriated it for the benefit of the Princess Thelusia, and such clouds of golden hair under the bonnet that Meg decided them also worthy to decorate the head of her favourite heroine. Up and down the lady walked in a slow, meditative fashion, and Meg watched her, wondering if she knew the giant, and were waiting to have an interview with him. How Meg longed to run and ask, but even at her time of life one begins to be shackled by the proprieties, and Meg felt it was impossible to gratify her yearning! She watched her so attentively, that at last the lady, passing several times close to the doorway, noticed the child. There was a look of admiration in Meg's face easy to read—especially to a woman as fond of such incense, from whatever quarter it might come, as this lady chanced to be. She glanced at Meg and smiled, and Meg thought the very sunshine grew brighter and warmer. The other lady had smiled at her too, but so

sadly, so sorrowfully, that Meg had asked Aunt Jean if she were unhappy. Still, even as she compared the two, Meg was faithful to her allegiance, and decided that her first favourite was more beautiful: this one might be a princess, like Thelusia, but the other was a grand queen at the very least.

Presently the lady turned down the very street Meg must take, and not long after the bell chimed three. She started up at once, bade farewell to the giant's castle and her dreams, and descended to the actualities of life. Aunt Jean expects prudence on the part of a child considered fit to be trusted out alone, and Meg would not disappoint that confidence for the world.

Meg saw the lady in advance, walking slowly along. At length she stopped before a house which Meg had remarked on her way to the Reservoir, from the quantities of flowers in the windows. She lived there — she was going up the steps. Meg hurried on to get a last look before she disappeared. Just as the child reached the dwelling the door opened and closed behind the lady, and Meg was turning away disappointed at not having had another glimpse of the lovely face, when she perceived something white lying on the lower step.

It was a handkerchief, as filmy and soft as a spider's web, Meg thought, and there was lace on it, such as she had seen in the windows when Aunt Jean took her into the region of shops away down Broadway, and an odour of violets that was like a breath of garden air.

Meg picked up the handkerchief, mounted the steps, and pulled the bell in great haste. An old woman appeared; she looked very cross, and began gesticulating and crying out in some unknown language, and was altogether so violent, that Meg's first impulse was to fling the handkerchief down and run away, afraid that she had encountered some malevolent fairy, for, alas! there were evil-disposed natures even among fairies. But she stood her ground, and was trying to explain what had brought her, though the old fairy only scolded the harder, and refused even to notice the bit of lace Meg held up. Just then the pretty lady came back through the hall, and addressed the woman in that same unknown tongue, only it sounded sweet and musical from her lips. She perceived Meg, and said in English,—

"What is it, little girl? What did you want?"

"Please, it's the handkerchief; I saw it on

the steps," Meg stammered, not so much because she felt shy as from eagerness.

"Ah, thanks; you are a good child—I am much obliged. Let me see, what shall I give you?" returned the lady, regarding Meg. The child's dress was simple enough, but she did not somehow look as if one could offer her money.

The old woman was talking all the while; the lady put up her hand, as if annoyed by the buzzing, and sent her away. Meg knew that by the gesture which accompanied the words. The attendant clattered along the marble floor on a pair of preposterously high heels, chattering like an ill-natured magpie till she disappeared.

Meg could not help watching her, and the lady said,—

"Were you frightened at my old Susanne? She is not so cross as she looks."

But Meg scarcely heard; she had caught sight of a flowering shrub in a great pot near the foot of the staircase—a marvel of dark glossy green leaves, and delicate pink blossoms hanging down like tiny bells. Meg clapped her hands in delight.

"Ah, I see—the flowers," said the lady, following the direction of her eyes. "You

like flowers? Come in—there are some I shall give you—come."

Meg would have expostulated, remembering that the fatal hour had sounded, but there was no time, for the lady drew her into the vestibule and closed the door. Meg allowed herself to be led across the hall into a room hung with blue and some other colour that Meg thought neither white nor grey, but like both, with silvery streaks through it. The bay-window was full of the plants she had seen from the street, and there were pictures, and a marble boy in the corner, and scores of marvels, which made Meg think fairy-land had opened at last.

"You shall have a bouquet to take home with you," the lady said, beginning to select flowers from the different plants, and talking pleasantly as she did so. "What is your name?—where do you live, little girl?"

"Meg; with Aunt Jean," returned the child, scarcely able to hear or answer at the moment.

"Ah, you think my room pretty, I see. What eyes the creature has!" And the lady stopped short and gazed fixedly at her. "Why they are like—what a goose I am!" she muttered to herself, then resumed her employment.

"O I forgot—I mustn't stay!" exclaimed Meg, coming suddenly back to her senses. "It's past the hour, and Aunt Jean said I was to go as soon as it struck."

"Then you shall—why what an honest little soul you are!" laughed the lady. "See—here is a pretty bouquet for you. Some time if you come back I shall give you more. I am much obliged to you—this is my pet handkerchief; I wouldn't have lost it for anything!"

She put the handkerchief to her lips and kissed it passionately several times, though laughing still, as if in mockery of her own childishness.

"Ah, little one," said she, "you don't know what my nonsense means; but you will understand if you remember it when you grow to be a woman—you will understand!"

She had caught her dress in the *jardinière*. She tried in vain to extricate it, uttering impatient French exclamations, and rushing into a tremendous excitement at once.

"I see where it's fastened," Meg said. She laid her bouquet on a chair and went upon her knees to pull out the fringe, which had twisted itself about some of the decorations of the stand.

The lady stood looking down at her. As

Meg rose, the silver cross which she always wore swung out from her neck and the lady saw it. She pulled the child up so suddenly that Meg was almost frightened; the face which bent over her had grown very pale.

"Take it off—let me see it," she said, pointing to the cross.

Meg obeyed; the lady turned away to examine the ornament, and stood for many moments with her back to the child. At last she seated herself in a chair, and motioned Meg to her side.

"Where did you get this?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"I 've always had it," Meg answered, ready to sob. "It was my mother's, Aunt Jean said."

"Your mother's? Hush—don't cry—don't be frightened! O, I—where do you live?"

"With Aunty Jean—down in Minetta Lane —number six," sobbed Meg, choking back her tears.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

The lady was not noticing her; she was staring at the cross again. She had turned the other side and seen the letter N that had been cut deep into the silver.

"May I go?" whispered Meg. "Aunt Jean will expect me—please, may I go?"

"What—did you speak? O, I know—you want to go; yes," the lady answered, controlling herself by a violent effort, though she looked very pale still, and there was a terror in her eyes far deeper than Meg's childish alarm. "Here is your cross—don't be afraid—it is only that I am not well."

"Aunt Jean takes drops," said Meg, practical, and ready to be of assistance, discomposed as she felt.

The lady laughed out again, but there was no mirth in the sound now. If Meg had been older she would have known that the stranger was dangerously near hysterics.

"I shall be better soon—I don't want any drops," she said. "Tell me again where you live—wait, let me write it."

She hurried to the table and scribbled the address which Meg repeated. Then she moved close to the child and looked fixedly at her.

"I cannot understand," she murmured. "O, I do think I must be mad! *O mon Dieu! —maman, maman!*"

She struggled with herself again, and tried to smile as she saw how her agitation confused and distressed the little girl.

"You want to go," she said.

"Yes, ma'am, please. Aunty will be expecting me," faltered Meg.

"Good-bye. Ah, I must open the street-door for you. Stop, do not forget your flowers."

Meg recovered her precious nosegay, saying,—"Thank you, ma'am, O so much."

She followed the lady across the hall into the vestibule.

"Perhaps I shall come to see you soon—be a good child."

"Yes, ma'am; thank you," returned Meg, trying hard to act up to her ideas of propriety and politeness.

The lady regarded the childish face wistfully for an instant, bent her head as if from an impulse to kiss the uplifted forehead, then drew back, and motioned her to go, repeating,—"Good-bye, good-bye."

Meg hurried down the street, and reached Mrs. MacLean's dwelling just as Aunt Jean had begun to grow anxious, and was sallying forth in search of her. It was time to go home, so, after a hasty adieu to their hostess, they set off, Aunt Jean reserving questions till she found herself alone with Meg.

And the lady whom Meg had left went back to her drawing-room, and walked up and down

for some time in troubled thought. At last she pulled from her bosom a cross which was the exact counterpart of that worn by Meg. Again she grew frightened and hysterical, moaning,—

"*O maman, maman! O mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

Nina de Farolles had worn the cross up to the day of her death. She had given it to Nathalie when her dying terrors wrung from her that dismal confession, and caused her to burden Nathalie's soul with the promise which even her fickle nature could not forget.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRESENTIMENT FULFILLED.

Two days later, Mrs. Murray, sitting in her cheerful room with her dolls, heard a knock at the door. Meg had gone to visit the violinist, who was not well, and had begged for the child's society. The musician was a crack-brained old fellow, with an odd gleam of genius, which enabled him to comprehend an imaginative little creature like Meg, just as it unfitted him for the ordinary duties of this hard world. Had he possessed less or more than this gleam, the case might have been different, but Meg was satisfied.

Mrs. Murray had reached a critical point in the embryo existence of the doll she was busy over, and did not feel best pleased at having to let the plump kid body and the waxen head fall apart on the table while she rose to see what ill-timed intruder might be at hand. She crossed the dark passage, and opened the outer door that led on to the staircase. A lady was

standing there. She did not raise her veil, but said quickly,—

"I want to see Mrs. Murray—the woman who has a little girl called Meg living with her."

So Mrs. Murray knew that the visitor was the lady of whom Meg had spoken, and felt flattered and curious, naturally enough. But she only said,—

"It 's me, ma'am. Will you walk in?"

The lady followed her into the room, sat down in the chair Mrs. Murray offered civilly enough, and put her veil back. Aunt Jean looked hard at her, looked a second time; and then there was neither curiosity nor civility in her face any longer. She had suddenly grown stiff and erect. If she had borrowed the poker for a backbone she could not have sat up straighter and more rigid. By the merest chance in the world Aunt Jean knew the stranger. She never forgot a face, and she had seen this lady before—remembered too the history related in connexion therewith.

She had come out of M'Intyre's shop one day, and was standing on the side walk, talking with an acquaintance who worked in the establishment, when Nathalie La Tour's carriage drove up, and Nathalie herself descended.

"There's one with money to spend," whispered Aunt Jean's companion. "Just look at her; and to see her smiling and happy as if there was no judgment and no hereafter!"

Aunt Jean's acquaintance was a vinegary-faced old maid, who had never seen the bright side of temptation, though she was as proud of her virtue as if she had fought scores of battles in its defence. She loved gossip also, as so many virtuous people do, and knew all about the famous Frenchwoman and her naughty books and naughtier life—her suppers, her *coterie* of bad women, her lovers, and all the rest; and she told the story so fast that Aunt Jean could not help listening.

"She comes to the shop often," the old maid said; "she's always ordering embroidery. If you just saw the chemises of her! I've had to take work to her house sometimes. O, it's awful! with a naked boy in one of the rooms, and she as bold as brass and talking so sweet! I always feel like quoting Sodom and Gomorrah to her, and Jezebel, and all the rest, but a body doesn't dare. St. Paul says, 'Be instant in season and out of season'; but if he'd had to do embroidery for a living, and one's place lost if a customer complains of impudence, maybe

he 'd not have found it so easy to do his duty after all."

Mrs. Murray had gone away laughing quietly to herself at the odd jumble virtuous Sarah Jenks made of the matter, but the history remained in her mind notwithstanding, and straightway at sight of Nathalie's face she grew as rigid as Sarah herself.

"The little girl is not here?" Madame La Tour was saying.

"No, ma'am," replied Aunt Jean.

"She was at my house the other day," pursued Madame, with a smile which few people could have resisted. "Perhaps she told you?"

Aunt Jean was sorely tempted to give utterance to another "No, ma'am," but her worship of truth compelled her to make the first word an assent instead of a denial.

"Such a nice little girl," pursued Madame, trying to speak carelessly, though there was a tremor in her voice, and her features worked nervously, and her usually perfect English caught a slight foreign intonation, as it did in moments of strong agitation. "I was much interested in her, and she said I might come to see her. I am very fond of little girls."

"You 're very good, ma'am," said Aunt Jean.

She was watching the visitor with her shrewd

grey eyes. She looked as upright and uncompromising as ever, and chopped off her words with the same unresponsive coldness, but her breath came quickly, and her eyes took a troubled, puzzled expression for all that.

She had pondered much over Meg's account of the lady's odd manner—her examination of the cross, her excited questions. She perceived her agitation now, and a score of bewildering thoughts rose in Mrs. Murray's mind. But one determined reflection came quickly in the wake of those perplexed fancies. This woman, whatever her motive might be, should neither see Meg nor obtain a shred of information in regard to her.

"You are her aunt, she told me," Madame continued. "Is her name Murray?"

The child was always so called. Aunt Jean compounded with her conscience, and gave a sign of assent.

"Then her father was your brother, I suppose?" said Madame. She paused—Aunt Jean did not speak. "Was he your brother?" demanded Madame, a sudden impatience shaking the voice she tried so hard to keep composed.

"No, ma'am," said Jean once more. She had come too near a falsehood already for her peace of mind—she would equivocate no further.

But she would tell nothing, even if she were forced to take refuge in sullenness or incivility to avoid so doing.

"Ah, her mother was your sister," returned Madame, and there was a tone of relief in her voice which did not escape her listener. "I am sorry the little girl is not in," she continued; "I would have liked to see her again. She does not remember her parents, she told me."

"No, she does not," returned Aunt Jean, and her voice likewise had a tone of relief in it. Something had changed the stranger's mood. She had found wanting the clue that she had expected to catch; her interest and agitation were both gone.

"Her parents dead! She is fortunate to have a kind relative like you to take care of her."

"What's in my power, I do," replied Aunt Jean.

If the lady would only go—go before further question could bring back whatever doubt or trouble had occasioned this visit! Mrs. Murray had some wild idea of inventing an excuse to get out of the room, but no reasonable pretext would suggest itself.

"I saw—I want you to tell me—" began Madame.

Aunt Jean felt that her only hope lay in assuming the defensive. She said quickly,—

"I'll ask your pardon, ma'am, but ye are strange to me, I must joost beg you to mind. I'm a puir, plain body, but a' the same I dinna like to have strangers come speering after me and mine this gait. I'm Scootch an' ye're Freench, if I may mak' bould to judge by your speech, an' that's the deeference betwixt us. I'm no meanin' to offend, but it's aye better to speak out what's in the mind, and then each onderstands the ither."

And very "Scootch" Aunt Jean grew both in pronunciation and looks. She was frightened at the ideas her visitor's words and manner roused in her mind, and determined to guard her secret under a panoply of grimness and obstinacy.

No trouble or mental agitation, however great, could be strong enough to keep Nathalie's preposterous vanity in the background. Aunt Jean could not have stung her worse than she did by that unintentional thrust. To be told that she spoke English with an accent—she who prided herself on having "two native languages"! She coloured sensitively, more hurt than angry, but of course Mrs. Murray ascribed the blush to the latter emotion.

"I've nae wish to be rude, ma'am," she continued, a little less stiffly, though she looked as grim and obstinate as ever. "It's only that you've made a mistake—my bairn and me couldna hae ony interest for you whatever. I'm a plain body, as ye may see, and Megsie is all I hae, an' there's no call for ony one to ask me questions about her."

Nathalie would have liked to believe; to depart and be done with the matter—put it out of her mind. She did not object to troubles of a certain sort—troubles which could assume a poetical colouring. But there was no romance in the business which had brought her here; it was a subject that, next to death, was always the most dismal for her to contemplate. Still she could not obey her first impulse—accept the obstinate old woman's assertion as proof that she had deceived herself. She recollected the cross—that initial scratched on the back. She would be glad to find that the woman knew nothing of its history—that it had come into her possession by accident—above all, that it had no connexion with the child. The surroundings were so commonplace, that Nathalie felt it would be a severe blow to be obliged to give the little girl a part in the fears and fancies which she had woven into a romantic

background for the picture so long carried in her mind.

She would ask her questions and go away; this blunt, stiff woman was an eye-sore to her. If she had been a hag, like some creature of sensational romance, or the child in the depths of misery and danger, Nathalie could have found an excitement in trying to follow out the clue she had at first believed found; but respectable poverty—poverty which toiled and was honest and content—possessed no interest whatever.

"I saw—she showed me a cross she wears," Nathalie said, trying to speak carelessly; not so much from a desire to deceive the woman as to cheat herself, eager to believe that she expected some answer which would set her mind at rest—be a proof that she had only excited herself over a chance likeness. "It was an odd little cross; it is one you purchased for her, I suppose?"

She stopped and looked inquiringly at the old woman, who had picked up her work and was sewing busily. If the creature would only say "Yes!" But Mrs. Murray stitched on and said nothing. "I have a reason for asking about it," continued Nathalie, her voice becoming tremulous again, for the silence troubled

"A reason—nothing that has to do with you or the child—but I should like—You bought the cross, did you not?"

It was full a minute before Mrs. Murray answered; but she could not escape—she must speak.

"No; I didna buy it," she said.

She heard a heavy, gasping breath; felt her arm seized in a quick, nervous grasp. Madame was leaning forward in her chair, her face had lost its colour again, and her eyes looked eager and frightened. "Where did you get it?—tell me! How did you come by the cross?" she exclaimed.

Speak—say a word which could in any way give this dreadful woman cause to think she had part or lot in that innocent child? Never! Aunt Jean would sooner have been trampled to death by wild horses.

"Ane gied it me, if ye maun ken," she said. "I hae naething in the world I didna come by honestly."

"It's not that; I don't doubt your honesty."

"Na, na, I shouldna fear ye wad; naebody iver did that," retorted Jean, seizing at any pretence for anger, in the hope that her visitor might take offence and end the interview.

"Who gave it to you?" cried Madame,

more excitedly. "Can't you speak?—don't you hear?"

Aunt Jean formed a sudden resolve.

"I'se tell ye," said she; "I'se tell ye; then maybe ye'el leeve me and mine to gae our lane."

"Who was it? A woman, I know! Where is she?—is she alive?!"

"Dead most like; I hae reason to think so," returned Jean, in a solemn voice, as she held up a warning finger. "Dead nae doot! 'The wages of sin is deeth.' If ever ye read your Bible ye know that."

"She hae a conscience," Mrs. Murray thought. "I'll no be haird as I was to the ither; but if I could only speak the right word—if I only could!"

"Get me some water—I'm not well," sighed Madame La Tour, letting her hands drop into her lap, and leaning back in her chair with a frightened, helpless look, which changed her whole face. Aunt Jean gave her a startled glance—a sudden resemblance to another face struck her for the first time; but sorely as it dismayed her, it was only an added reason for hugging her secret fast. Speak? Never! She would save her child—her one treasure—her sweet Meg! That was her duty in this world.

God would require at her hands the precious soul His mysterious workings had entrusted to her guardianship.

She was thinking this as she hurried to fetch the water. She came back to Madame La Tour —put the tumbler into her shaking hand. Madame drank eagerly—her colour and strength began to return.

Aunt Jean felt a pity for the woman rise in her heart. It was not only that she wanted to say some word which should strike to her soul, but something that should bring comfort too.

"Ma'am," she said softly, "there's ither things in the Bible too; there's loving promises, and there's a hope, if only a body will turn from the evil—it's ne'er too late. He raised the dead to life—He pardoned the Magdalen—O, He's just as kind and pitiful this day."

"You're mad!" cried Nathalie. "You're a hopeless, raving lunatic! How dare you talk to me like that! What idea have you got in your head?—for whom do you mistake me? Why, you crazy thing. What dreadful words —what a horrible old woman in every way! I don't want to hear your ignorant fancies, your antiquated superstitions," Madame cried desperately. "You are rude and impertinent; you're a bad-hearted creature too."

Nathalie had all her mother's horror of death. The very word was enough to give her a nervous spasm in her calmest moments, and now, when half beside herself with excitement, it was torture of the most horrible description to hear this cruel creature complacently naming it, and talking as her mother used in her dark moods of pain and remorse. That death-scene rose before her—the moans, the prayers, the imprecations; but through them all came the words which had been reiterated over and over —the words she could never forget, which had a hold upon her mind such as no other memory ever did or could possess. "You have promised, Nathalie—you have promised! I shall watch you—I shall be near: take care that you don't forget."

Why, many a time she had wakened from sleep with those words ringing in her ear; had run to Susanne's room for refuge, almost expecting to see her mother's ghost appear and demand if she had forgotten! Here, in the broad daylight, with the sun shining through the window, and in the midst of these common-place surroundings, the same dreadful terror came over her. She hid her face in her hands and shivered piteously.

What could Jean think but that her warning

had struck home—awakened some gleam of remorse in the heart of this woman, whose depraved life was too well known for harsh judgments to be a slander?

"You ought to feel as if a queen had honoured you by coming! You might see my name the first time you go out; you can read, can't you? I saw the placards with my books and my name at the corner even; why, I am Madame La Tour!"

That the very stones in the street would have recognized this title, was a solemn faith to Nathalie's positively sublime vanity. The Empress of All the Russias could not have revealed her identity with a more perfect confidence of her name being a familiar sound through the length and breadth of Christendom.

That appalling old woman! She only shook her head sadly, and as firm in her conviction that she was following out the line of duty as ever one set of Christians were when they put to death those who presumed to reject their creeds, said, with a mingling of firmness and pity,—

"It 's because I do know your name that I speak—just for that; and O, if ye wad listen! I 'm poor and plain and ignorant maybe, but it 's all written there—you canna mistake it!"

She put her hand on the great old-fashioned Bible that lay upon the table. "Nae money, nae youth, nae beauty can escape; the time of reckoning comes—'The wages of sin is deeth!' O dinna reject the warning; it's never too late—never!"

"Go away from me, let me get out of your house!" exclaimed Nathalie, really convinced now that the woman was mad.

"It's nae use, it's nae use!" sighed Aunt Jean, and sat drearily down in a chair opposite, and gazed with tears in her eyes at this brand which refused to be plucked from the burning.

Pathetic and solemn as the scene was, I think had there been a saint in the room who understood the characters and motives of both, he must have laughed in spite of himself.

The old woman's restored composure brought back Nathalie's courage. She was a lunatic no doubt, but not a dangerous one. Aunt Jean sat resting her elbow on the table, supporting her head with her hand.

She was thinking of that lost creature who had crossed her path years ago—of the time she asw her in the fullness of youth and beauty—before her sin had found her out. She was thinking of that last interview; of the desolate, desperate, homeless wretch whom she

had rescued from the night and the storm and taken under her roof; who had drifted away to new misery—new sin.

Ah, if she could only tell the tale in fitting words; if she could only bring the history close to the heart and conscience of this pretty, arrogant creature, who was treading the same downward road—treading among the flowers still, but beyond loomed the night and the storm and worse—worse! Strive as she might, believe in God's goodness as she did, Aunt Jean's mind was so troubled by dark, Calvinistic creeds, that all hope, all promise, ended with this life.

The silence and the woman's quietness of manner had given Nathalie time to recover her wits. She shook out her ruffled plumage, smiled, and said sweetly,—

"Now please tell me all you can about the cross, there 's a good soul; it is time I was gone."

"The crucifeex?" cried aunt Jean. "Didna ye hear me say ane gied it me?"

"Yes, yes; but who—who?"

"It 's no a story about me or mine, remember that; but I'll tell it ye—yes, I'll tell it; mayhap it 'll bring the warning hame."

"*O mon Dieu!*" groaned Nathalie. "There she goes again with her warnings and every

sort of horror! My good creature, don't excite yourself—just give me a plain answer."

"I 'll gie ye ane; I will!" said Aunt Jean. It 's to ken how I had the crucifeex? A wicked, papistical emblem, that 's been a sair trouble to me mony a time, but I couldna' bring mysel' to put it awa for by—but that 's no' the question."

"No, no; I only want to know who gave it to you," Nathalie said, growing anxious and eager again.

Aunt Jean leaned forward, speaking slowly, with her lean forefinger extended to point her words.

"She was nane o' me or mine, do ye mind that? A poor, lost creature that I saw ance in the midst of her wealth and her luxury—goin' down a flowery path; but it led straight to hell—dinna' forget that! Ye may cover up the sin wi' gauds and treenkets—ye may ha' the voice o' hairps and the sounds o' revelry, but it wins straight to hell a' the same."

"The cross—I only want to hear about the cross!" shivered Nathalie.

She would have got up and run away just from a vague nervous terror, but Aunt Jean's solemn eyes and Aunt Jean's warning finger held her fast.

"It 's joost a pairt of it," the old woman answered. "That was the way I see her first —in broidered raiment and jewels and a' the rest, and it 's on my soul that I was no' merciful eneugh—for she was young—O, younger than you, me leddy, and joost as fair—"

"I 'll not have you talk about me," broke in Nathalie passionately. "I 'll not stay; you shall be made to speak—I 'll send those who will force you to; but I 'll not stay."

Yet Aunt Jean's eyes held her fast—she could no more have stirred than if she had been bound in her chair.

"And I left her in the midst of her sin, for she 'd hear nae warning—mind that!" continued Jean in a deeper voice, with an added trouble in her keen grey eyes. "And where did I find her next? In the street, wi' ne'er a shelter left—lovers and friends far aloof, and she speerin' at the black river and dazing her poor brain wi' its roar, and the worst sin o' all temptin' her like a fiend."

"*O mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" moaned Nathalie.

"I gie her shelter—I 'd ha' saved her if I could, but she wadna' bide! She went her lane—stole off while I slept, and journeyed on down the fearsome road—down, down; and I hae reason to think the end cam' at last—the

awfu' end, and she lies in a nameless grave, awa' by the great Paceefic shore, and ne'er a sign of her left but the bit cross I let my childie wear to comfort me auld heart a bit by thinkin' that though I was haird at first, I softened—little eno' I did, but I had the wull—I 'm aye glad and thankful for that."

She put her hand before her eyes, and sat silent.

Dead! That was the one thought in Nathalie's mind. She could not tell if she were shocked or grieved that the dread which had haunted her so long was lightened. Dead! There need be no further remembrance of her promise—there was nothing to do.

Then every other reflection vanished in a desire to get beyond the woman's reach—out of the sound of her voice. She rose quickly, and hurried toward the door. She was weak and shaken; she could bear nothing further—not a word—a syllable; she should faint or go into hysterics if those dull, grating tones struck her ear again.

Aunt Jean heard her rise, but she did not move. She watched her depart in silence, with a keen feeling of relief. She had uttered her warning—she was powerless to do more. And Meg was safe—God had cared for the nameless

little one. No further danger would beset the child; she might grow up humble, honest. The Lord would spare her—He would spare her! For when it became a matter that touched her beloved, Aunt Jean could forget, as the sternest do, the mysterious sentence in regard to the transmission of punishment for sin from father to child, though ordinarily she held fast to it in all the horror of its full meaning—accepted it literally, forgetting that though "the letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive."

She watched the graceful creature float out of the room with her golden hair and her silken robes, and all the radiance that to most eyes would have brightened the shadowy haunt, and when the door closed, Aunt Jean went down upon her knees, and while she thanked God for having been allowed to keep her darling safe, she prayed for the beautiful woman, compassionating the sinner even while she shuddered at the sin.

As Nathalie La Tour reached the lower hall, she encountered a lady who had just entered the house. They both looked up simultaneously—their eyes met; once more she and Elizabeth Crauford were standing face to face.

"Elizabeth!" exclaimed Madame La Tour, forgetting her recent agitation—forgetting what

she had always remembered when thinking of her former friend, that Elizabeth's judgments upon her looks and her doctrines would be too condemnatory for any chance of future companionship to be possible,—forgetting everything except that she saw before her the one member of her own sex for whom she had ever really cared,—"Elizabeth! How glad I am—how odd to meet you—after so long! Aren't you glad—wont you speak to me—don't you know me, Elizabeth?"

She had begun eagerly—the broken exclamations came more and more slowly, as she looked at her former friend standing there silent, unresponsive, not noticing her extended hand, and saw too the mingled emotions which stirred the pale, proud features—aversion—horror! Nathalie was too quick in her perceptions not to read the whole.

Her voice died in a sort of sob; her lips quivered, her eyes filled with a sudden trouble, which gave her face the childish look Elizabeth recollected so well—the look which in the old days had never failed to soften her heart, however much Nathalie might have annoyed or shocked her by the utterance of her absurd theories or wicked transcendentalism.

But she was not softened now. One could

not say that it was anger which filled her heart. This woman had stolen no treasure that was hers; the law bound her to Darrell Vaughan; but in listening to his love, Nathalie brought to her no appreciable personal wrong. Horror and aversion were in her face—Nathalie read its language aright; but neither jealousy nor pain had any part therein. It was only as if a spirit of evil had started up before her under a semblance of beauty, and were trying to cheat her, in spite of all her knowledge of the truth, into a belief of its purity.

After an instant, she spoke; courteously, quietly—except that she uttered the name just as she might have addressed a stranger.

"Will Madame La Tour allow me to pass?" she said.

"O Elizabeth!" exclaimed Nathalie again. There were positively tears in her eyes. Tears did not mean much with her; she could weep over touching poetry, a pathetic novel, a sorrowful play. It was the same sort of sentiment that moved her now; still to her it was real; light, transitory feelings were all that her facile nature could hold. But to Elizabeth the mournful voice, the pretty, pleading gestures, the misty eyes, were only a paltry bit of acting, that had not even the excuse of a motive.

She moved a step forward, impatient of the scene, but Nathalie did not stir—she was standing on the lower stair, and kept her place.

"I have thought so much about you—I wanted so to see you again!—I wondered how and where we should meet—and now you 'll not speak to me even. O Elizabeth, Elizabeth!" she cried anew.

"I must again ask you to let me pass," was all Elizabeth said.

"O, you hard-hearted thing!" exclaimed Nathalie, a hot anger drying her tears and flushing her face. "I couldn't treat any creature so that I had ever called my friend, no matter what had happened."

"The difference between Nathalie L'Estrange and Madame La Tour is too great for me to feel that they are one and the same," Elizabeth replied. "If you will not let me pass, I must go away again."

She turned; Nathalie caught her dress, and said, in a voice which was only pleading and earnest,—

"Don't leave me like that—don't!"

"I must," Elizabeth answered. "Madame La Tour ought to feel the impossibility of our meeting even—standing face to face—exchanging so much as a word."

A vivid scarlet rushed into Nathalie's cheeks. Proud of her daring creeds, at the same time, in odd contradiction, proud of the personal purity of her life, she felt a certain shame in listening to Elizabeth's rebuke—shame so strong that she could not even be angry: Naturally Elizabeth ascribed that confusion to a very different cause from its real one. She could but recollect that she was Darrell Vaughan's wife, and this woman one for whose sake he was perilling reputation, honour, setting at naught the common decencies of life.

"I don't see why you should be so hard on me," said Nathalie, with another sob in her voice. "You may not like my books, you may not think as I do; but I have won fame, I have proved that I am not an ordinary, frivolous woman; and you used to talk so much about worshipping genius, and all that."

"Madame La Tour remembers my opinions so accurately that she ought to recollect there were things I prized more highly," was the response.

"O, you always had all sorts of old-fashioned ideas!" retorted Nathalie impatiently. "But you can't say I'm not famous and admired! Did you ever read one of my books?"

"You know I never have."

Nathalie was vexed. She could have borne coldness, would not have minded rebuke or harsh language; but to have any human creature deny that she was pretty, or speak scornfully of her literary labours, was too much for her patience.

"Ah!" said she, with a shrug of her shoulders; "I'd have said there was one woman in the world incapable of envy, but I see you are not different from the rest."

That speech was so thoroughly Nathalie. Elizabeth could almost have smiled—almost have believed that these weary years since they parted were only a dream; that she and this absurd, contradictory, impossible creature, were back in the pleasant Swiss valley, and no sin on the creature's soul worse than that of holding borrowed theories, whose wickedness she seemed too frivolous to comprehend.

She moved aside a little, and Elizabeth took advantage of this to pass her. Again Nathalie put out her hand and caught Elizabeth's dress.

"So you mean to go?" she asked. "You think because I have a soul broad enough to hold new, true creeds, that I must necessarily be what you call bad. Go, then. I would not be you with all your virtue and your pride.

Narrow, petty, and so cold! Go; we shall not see one another again! O—"

She broke off suddenly. A new thought struck her.

"Why what are you doing here?" she asked.

"There is a woman I come sometimes to visit," Elizabeth said. "Please to let go my dress, Madame La Tour."

"A Scotchwoman, with a little girl—a niece?"

"Yes."

"Great heavens!" cried Nathalie. "You don't know about the cross?" She struck her hands hard together; her anger at Elizabeth's scorn of her books gave her a new idea. "Why shouldn't you bear part of the burden?" cried she. "I wouldn't have told you; I'd have died to keep the knowledge from you, for I loved you—yes, I did! I never cared half so much for any girl; but you hate me, you brush me out of your path, and I'll tell!"

Was she about to boast of her empire over Vaughan? Had she sunk so low that, to gratify her malice, she would be capable of this baseness?

"Tell me nothing!" Elizabeth said. "Whatever you may have become you would regret it some day, if there is a trace of the old

Nathalie left. Go your way and let me go mine. Our paths need not cross."

"There is a fate links your way with mine," cried Nathalie in her theatrical fashion; "the threads were woven before you or I was born. Ay, that was what my warning meant when I first met you—that was the trouble I must bring you! May be I shall be sorry, but I 'll tell all the same. I 've borne it alone long enough; take your share."

She was holding Elizabeth fast again. Without an absolute physical struggle Mrs. Vaughan could not have freed herself.

"Speak then," said Elizabeth. "I too have borne so much that my heart is callous. I can bear even this."

Still she misinterpreted Nathalie's meaning, still gave it the only significance it could have to her mind.

"You don't know, you don't know—"

"Hush!" interrupted Elizabeth. "I have seen with my own eyes. Nathalie, I know everything."

"And did you ever try to find her—to help? I thought I had a clue, and it has failed, only I know she is dead."

"Dead! Who?" asked Elizabeth, wondering if the woman had gone out of her senses.

"Marguerite—my sister and yours—the child of your father and my mother, Nina de Favolles!" exclaimed Nathalie.

Elizabeth clutched blindly at the banisters, and would have fallen had not Nathalie held her up.

"O Elizabeth!" she cried, struck with a sudden remorse. "I am so sorry, indeed I am. You didn't know, you—"

"Hush!" interrupted Elizabeth again, sitting down on the stairs. "It is not true; it is not true!"

"It is true. I have old letters of your father's that would prove it. Mamma gave the child away. She was brought to America. When mamma was dying she told me—begged me to find her, if I could. She wore a cross—like this."

Nathalie drew from her bosom a cross exactly like the one Elizabeth had been shown by Mrs. Murray. She was stunned and faint. The last prop seemed forced from under her feet by this tale of her father's sin.

"She is dead," pursued Nathalie; "dead! I saw the cross on that child's neck. But these people were nothing to Marguerite; the old woman was kind to her once, and Marguerite gave her that."

Elizabeth found strength to get upon her feet, and turned her white face on Madame La Tour.

"I don't believe the story you have told me," she said; "I don't believe it."

Again anger overcame all other emotions in Nathalie's mind, even her sudden remorse. She took two letters from her pocket and held them toward Elizabeth.

"Then read these and you will believe it," cried she. "I brought them thinking that if the child proved to be Marguerite's I might need them. They weren't wanted; but look at them, you—"

She unfolded one and held it before Elizabeth. She read almost in spite of herself—read enough to know that doubt was impossible. She closed her eyes for an instant, and clung to the banisters again.

"O dear, O dear, I wish I had not!" moaned Nathalie, thrusting the letters into her pocket, with a return of terror and remorse. "Elizabeth—Elizabeth!"

Mrs. Vaughan let her hands drop to her sides—bent her death-like face upon Nathalie.

"If you are satisfied—go," she said.

This time Nathalie shrank away without a word.

"I am sorry I told her," she muttered, as her

carriage rolled off. "But she vexed me so! Well, we shall not meet again—and I did not even ask if she were married! O, I was very fond of her, my beautiful Elizabeth! *Ah mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* But I don't want to think about her—thank goodness I know nobody who will ever mention her name. And it's all so odd! Poor Marguerite — O mamma, mamma!"

She began to shiver and sob, and was so exhausted by the time she reached home, that she could only creep into bed and let Susanne dose her with sedatives. But when evening came she was quite restored, able to receive Vaughan and other guests, and charm them all by her brilliancy and high spirits.

CHAPTER VI.

SO NEAR DEATH.

It was very late the next morning when Elizabeth left her chamber and went down into the breakfast-room. She was ill; suffering bodily as well as mental pain. In all the dismal watches which had become so familiar to her during these years of trouble, perhaps no vigil had been so sad as that of the past night.

Even without the testimony of the letter, it would have been useless to try for comfort by any attempt to disbelieve the tale Madame La Tour had revealed in her reckless anger. Motive for a falsehood there could have been none; besides there was the stamp of truth in Nathalie's face—in every word she uttered. Circumstances long forgotten came back and added their proof to the record. Even the name Nathalie had spoken—Nina de Favolles; it struck Elizabeth with a sense of familiarity when she heard it, the time and place recurred to her before her vigil ended. Years and years

ago, in Europe, when she was a tiny child. It was one of the rare occasions on which Elizabeth could recollect seeing her mother roused to anger. Now and then Mr. Crauford would persevere in teazing and annoying her until he excited a storm before which he quailed. There had been contention between the parents, and they quarrelled, unconscious that the little daughter had stolen into the room. Nina de Favolles! It was Mrs. Crauford who had uttered the name in the midst of angry and disdainful reproaches. Elizabeth remembered how white her mother was—how her great eyes flashed as she spoke; remembered her father's growing humble and penitent at once.

Then there returned the recollections of Mr. Crauford's anger and nervous dread when he discovered the identity of their neighbour at La Maladèyre—the odd, rude words Nathalie's mother had several times spoken to her. There was no memory, however slight, which would not have brought its evidence even without the letter.

If she could only have got away from all thought—could have put the matter out of her mind as a history which perished with those dead and gone—a tale which could in no way

concern her. But this was impossible. The name by which Nathalie had mentioned their sister—yes, great God, their sister—Nathalie's as well as hers! And Nathalie believed her dead; but there was no actual proof of that. Elizabeth had found strength after Madame La Tour left her to go on up to Jean Murray's room—had heard the story of the interview; Jean's belief of some relationship between this wicked woman and Meg's mother; her thankfulness that she had been able to keep from betraying anything.

Meg's mother! O it was too horrible—for the whole loathsome truth struck Elizabeth at length. Milady—Marguerite—this was Meg's mother; the girl Darrell Vaughan had deserted—left to find a grave for her shame as best she could. And that unknown sister, hers and Nathalie's—this was Marguerite too, the same Marguerite.

It was as if Fate had taken a horrible pleasure in weaving the most unlikely events into one web; working out a drama the most improbable, with a pitiless persistence which rendered the slightest unity complete.

So the night had gone by. To be quiet, to lie in bed, was out of the question. Elizabeth set the doors open that connected her suite of

chambers, opened the door even into the corridor, to afford herself a longer march, and paced up and down their length for hours. A window-shutter in the hall had been left ajar; the moonlight streamed in and trembled across the floor like a ghostly presence. Up and down, up and down, Elizabeth passed; thinking, thinking, watching, her whole thwarted life spread before her. She was too crushed and broken for active rebellion; worn and weakened in mind as well as body, yet no more able to drive thought away than she was to seek physical repose.

Ah, no wonder the shock of the first discovery she had made, the connexion between Meg and Darrell Vaughan, had held a horror deeper even than the knowledge of his sin! No wonder the idea of the lost girl fastened with such persistency on her soul, and the feeling that she must find, must help her, had been like a command from some higher power.

Her sister—hers! Not a blow spared—not a love of her life allowed to keep its reverence and purity! Sin—treachery—wretchedness—wherever she turned. And what could it avail that all this knowledge should fall upon her? What could she do—what work was there for

her in the atoning for these crimes? If Marguerite were alive, how find, how aid her? And she was; Elizabeth could neither content herself with Mrs. Murray's conviction nor believe Vaughan's tale. The wretched outcast had not been freed from her misery and shame—she was alive. These revelations had a force and meaning; they came thus into her life because she was expected to act. But how—which way turn—what step take even to learn if Marguerite were living or dead?

So the night dragged on. Toward morning Elizabeth heard a sound below stairs—a key turning in the street-door. Vaughan had returned; she knew that it was not unusual for him to enter at this hour. She slipped back into her room and partially closed the door. She never watched him—shrank always from seeing him at such seasons; but to-night somehow she could not stir—she must stand there and look.

Presently he came up the stairs, wearily, heavily; passed along the corridor, carrying a taper in his hand. He was pale as a ghost—his eyes gleamed with an unnatural fire—his step steady enough, though slow. But Elizabeth was no longer blind—a doleful experience had rendered that impossible. She knew the

night had been spent in some wild carouse. To make him look as he did now—like a coarse spirit of evil showing through the face she could remember so fine, so noble—was the only effect of potations which would have reduced another man to brutal intoxication.

He walked on and entered his chamber. She closed her door, crept into her bed-room, put out the light, and sat there shivering in the silence till at last the dawn peeped through the curtains, and warned her that another day had begun. Then she undressed and went to bed; and then followed the heavy, unrefreshing sleep, which morning often brings one after a wakeful night of suffering.

So it was very late when she went downstairs. A pile of letters and newspapers lay by Vaughan's plate. Soon he came into the room; the servant was present, so there were quiet salutations, and the idle attempts at conversation which decorum demanded. When the man went out, Darrell began opening his letters. One of the epistles was in the handwriting of Mr. Carstoe, Elizabeth saw. The contents irritated Vaughan evidently. He read, crushed the sheet in his hand, and muttered an oath; he had long since ceased to pay his wife the compliment of guarding

against such brutality in her presence. Formerly it was her habit to rise and leave the room when he outraged her in that manner; but she had ceased to do this. She could not escape from the coarse horrors of her life, why vex him, and perhaps bring on a disgraceful scene by noticing an insult not directed her way?

He took up his newspapers; among these she noticed a California journal, which he had sent to him regularly each week. He had given the order as long ago as when he was in the Pacific State, and the paper still continued to come—not that he cared particularly for it, but he had grown accustomed to its arrival, and so had never withdrawn his subscription.

Elizabeth, seeing him occupied, rose from the table to leave the room. For days past he had been in one of his moods of not speaking to her; he would pass her on the stairs, or in the hall, without a word—sit at meals speechless, except when the servants were about. His sullen fits had ceased to irritate her, though there are few things more vexatious than such conduct, even on the part of a person to whom one is perfectly indifferent, if forced to live in the same house.

She stopped on her way out to look at some hyacinths in one of the windows — delicate

purple and white blossoms, heavy with a delicious fragrance, which brought memories of her happy childhood—of a summer she had once spent at her Aunt Crauford's place off in the heart of Pennsylvania.

Then she heard Vaughan give the table a push which made the cups and plates rattle. She glanced instinctively round. If Mr. Carstoe's letter had vexed him, there was something in the journal which roused him to a more fiery anger. The wildest malediction, the most atrocious blasphemy she had ever heard from his lips, caused her to hurry on, eager to escape. He did not notice her; he was absolutely tearing the newspaper with fingers and teeth, as a wolf might worry its prey.

She knew that dissipation and evil courses had left him more and more incapable of self-control, but there was something inexpressibly painful in this exhibition. He was so fierce in look and gesture that it took away from the pettiness of the act. The show of emotion was absolutely terrible from the possibilities it suggested for the future—the danger that his very reason had begun to be troubled by the reckless degradation of his life.

It might have been an hour after that he entered her morning-room, where she sat making

a pretence of work—to read was out of the question. Somehow, in the quiet in which she was forced to sit down, agitated, feverish with a wild desire in her soul to rush forth—to do she knew not what—attempt some effort at the task which Fate seemed to call upon her to perform, and yet toward which it opened no possible way,—she found a sensation of comfort in letting her fingers plod along the weary hems. No pretty fancy task, no delicate crochet or lady-like embroidery; just a thick, warm dress she was making for a pensioner; one of the few acts of usefulness left in her power—to her who had dreamed of being a strength, an aid in her day and generation!

"Didn't I give you some papers to keep awhile ago—it may have been last autumn?" he asked.

"Yes; just before you went to Virginia," she replied.

"I want them," he said; "these are the deeds of those lots I bought in Albany—there 's a good chance to sell." Then he could not resist saying something ill natured. "Sorry to disturb your *dolce far niente*," he sneered. "I am aware you don't like me to intrude into this *sanctum;* but I happened to remember the papers as I was passing your door, and so ventured to enter."

Last night's dissipation had left him pale and haggard, but there was a disturbance in his face beyond those signs—a strange trouble and anxiety. Elizabeth was thinking this; conscious of pity for the man so obstinately bent on self-destruction. In spite of what she knew him to be, she could not help remembering there had been capabilities in his nature of results so different—the possibility of making a real good, a true use, of the life he wasted, growing daily less careful to cover its baseness with the veil of fine pretence under which he had once shrouded its reality.

Thinking these things even as she rose to seek the papers, trying at the same time to recollect where they had been put. He sank into an arm-chair and sat watching her. Had she glanced at him again, she would have seen other revelations in his face—a frown of irritation and dislike so black that it was fairly like hatred. He did hate her sometimes. She looked so pure, so noble this morning—with a strange patience in her sad eyes! He was feeling how far off she was from him,—how something—that religion he sneered at, that faith he held to be a weak delusion—put her soul beyond his reach. And she was so beautiful! Even with a mad passion in his heart for another woman, her

beauty at this moment had its influence. Faithfulness was out of the question in his nature—he would have bartered his soul for Nathalie; yet that love, absorbing as it was, would not have hindered his plunging into the first disgraceful amour that chanced to offer itself.

But though he felt the spell of her beauty as he gazed, he was hating her; no matter what occurred to irritate him, however distant the thing might be from any connexion with her, he was always bitter towards her at such moments; longed to do her a mischief; found a vent for his ill humour by torturing her; felt always as if she in some way must be to blame.

Elizabeth remembered where she had put the papers. She had kept the desk which had been old Mr. Vaughan's; it was strong and the lock peculiar—a safe receptable for small articles that needed to be secure. Besides, she liked having this memento of the dead man toward whom her fancy always turned so tenderly. She took the desk out of a cabinet, set it on a table, sought her keys to open it. Darrell, idly watching her, noticed the desk, recollected it.

"Where did you get that?" he called. "Have you been rummaging among my things? What the devil do you mean by such a performance?"

She glanced at him over her shoulder with one of those looks of icy disdain with which she always met such attacks.

"You wrote me to look for some deeds that were in a trunk of yours," she said. "I found this desk; it was empty. I took a fancy to have it—that is all."

"O don't be tragic!" retorted he. "Come, get me my papers; I can't wait all day; I hate this room anyhow."

In removing the contents of the desk to find the deeds, Elizabeth came upon the box of jewels, placed there the day she showed them to Launce Cromlin; she had never recollected to speak to Vaughan of their discovery. The box was lying on the documents she wanted; she took them both out together. Vaughan had risen in one of his sudden fits of impatience—he reached her just as she turned from the table.

"At last!" said he, rudely taking the papers out of her hand. The box fell upon the table, the lid dropped off. The ring, the stud, the unset jewels, lay in a little glittering heap upon the cloth.

There was a sound from Darrell Vaughan's white lips—something at once a groan and a curse. The next instant Elizabeth felt herself seized in an iron grasp—was flung forward

upon her knees. In her utter bewilderment and confusion she saw her husband's face bending over her, convulsed and awful almost beyond any semblance of humanity.

He could not articulate; he was trying to speak—nothing but gasps escaped him. Specks of foam flew from his lips, his eyes glared like a wild beast's. He shook her to and fro as she knelt. It was death at last! He would kill her! This was to be the end. She was not frightened; she did not even know that his clutch hurt; only conscious that his face meant murder, and that there was a strange comfort in feeling death near, for death meant freedom —escape!

"I don't mind!" she whispered, gazing always into his mad eyes, not aware that she spoke. "Kill me—I don't mind!"

He pulled her up from the floor and flung her into a chair. He must have realized then how near he had come to murder — the devilish temptation must have been strong in his soul still. He retreated, made a spring toward her, forced himself back, got the table between them, griped it with both hands, and held himself quiet.

"Say something!" he groaned. "Quick! Call somebody—get out of my reach! I shall

kill you this time—I can't help it—I shall kill you!"

"O do it!" she cried, in a voice scarcely less wild than his own. There was no patience, no fortitude, no thought of right or wrong, no recollection of anything for the moment but the untold horror of her life—the insane longing that it should end—no matter how—only end!

He staggered down the chamber, opened the door, crossed the corridor into one of his rooms directly opposite. He left that door open too. From her seat Elizabeth could see him. He went to a closet, unlocked it, took out a decanter of brandy, more than half filled a goblet, and swallowed the contents at a draught. If she had wished, she lacked force to stir—to lock herself in from danger; but she did not think of it. If she had any distinct thought in her mind, it was a feeling of disappointment that after all death had not come when it was so near—so near!

He stood still in the middle of the room; she sat and watched him in the same blind, uncomprehending fashion. He came back into her chamber, closed the door behind him, and sat down, still keeping the table between them. His face was livid yet, his eyes kept their

sombre fire; but the spasm so like insanity was over—the brandy had given his nerves a temporary strength.

"How did you come by those things—I mean, where did you steal them?" he asked. "You 're a thief—do you know that—a thief!"

"O," she said, with slow, concentrated bitterness, "I might have known you were too cowardly to murder me—you haven't courage to go beyond insult and outrage."

"Those things—those jewels—how did you come by them?" he repeated.

Her first impulse was to remain silent, but her power to reflect, her better feelings returned. The whirl and confusion left her brain. She was calm enough; could recollect that to tantalize him would perhaps be a wickedness beyond his—he might be mad—she had sometimes feared such a fate for him; it might have come at last.

"There is no secret, no mystery," she said. "I found them in one of the trunks I opened. I supposed you had forgotten them—I took them out, and did not remember to tell you."

He *had* forgotten them! Another of those strange lapses of memory which had grown more and more frequent during the past years, torturing him with a dread which he would not

study nor face. He leaned his elbows upon the table, and rested his head on his hands, pressing them hard across it. His brain reeled; the diamonds danced like specks of fire before his eyes. These mute but potent proofs of his guilt, these evidences of that awful episode which he had put aside as easily as other men would the recollection of a trifling fault, here they appeared again.

He could have sworn that he had destroyed them—had flung the box into the ocean one night during his voyage back from California. Then he remembered. He had mistaken one box for another in packing his things. He found when too late that he had reserved a box containing a watch—the jewels he had put into a trunk which was down in the depths of the hold, and could not be reached.

When he changed steamers at Panama, he would open the trunk, and get the jewels. He had stayed two days on the isthmus before the Atlantic steamer was ready to sail. The dullness, and a desire to convince himself that the painful effects of the last doze of hasheesh were only caused by some peculiar physical state, caused him again to indulge in its use.

Lying on his bed under the influence of the drug, he had in fancy enacted the work he

meant to do. He was on the steamer, he opened the trunk, took the jewels out, and flung them into the sea. It was all real—every link perfect—even to the excuse he had given for wishing that particular trunk placed in his state room. He had gone to the stern; the moon was shining; the foam looked to his eyes as if the gems he had cast down were rising and flashing in countless multitudes. As he walked back, he met the captain—they had talked—he could recall the conversation.

From that day to this he had not thought of the affair. Now here the diamonds appeared again, and the hasheesh dream separated itself from the reality. He saw the dream and the fact side by side; yet, though he realized it was a vision, it looked real as ever.

And he had betrayed himself—he could recollect this too. Impossible that Elizabeth should not feel there was an awful secret connected with the jewels after the insane scene he had made. He must find some excuse, offer some reason; and his brain was so dull—his invention failed so!

"I'm sorry," he said, with a kind of sudden hesitation. "I'm not well this morning. You couldn't know—but those jewels had something to do with my uncle's history." (The

tale seemed to frame itself as he went on. Elizabeth did not even deign him a glance.) "I thought he had sold them—got rid of them; he meant to. I can't explain—the matter can't be talked of even between us; it was my uncle's secret, and that fellow's, Launce Cromlin."

He had not thought of his cousin a second before he spoke; the name came to his lips, and he uttered it.

"I don't wish any explanation," Elizabeth said quickly.

He looked at her; she had raised her eyes. She was perfectly calm and self-possessed; he knew that she did not believe a word he had spoken. Once more he felt his fingers quiver with the hot thrill—the murderous instinct which had animated him when he held her in that stern grasp. He clasped his hands together, and pressed them hard down on the table.

"Yes—Launce Cromlin's secret; more of his misdoing," he went on slowly. "If it had not been for his conduct, my uncle might be alive this day."

It was on Elizabeth's lips to defend Launce —to tell the man what she knew of his treachery, his falsehoods; but what possible good could come of such an avowal? She sat silent; turned her eyes away from his face,

certain that they told the tale almost as plainly as words could have done.

"Be good enough to give me no explanation," she said wearily. "Take the diamonds; don't let me have to see them—be obliged to remember this day."

"You are very chary of hearing anything against our cousin!" sneered Vaughan, with a sudden look of suspicion.

"Yes," she replied coldly; "I believe him to be a good man: we need not talk about him."

He only answered by that same evil look. He began collecting the jewels and putting them into the box.

"This matter must rest between you and me," he said; "forget it if you can. No one has seen the diamonds?"

"Your cousin saw them, and Mr. Carstoe too," she answered.

This time, had he reached her, she would have been a dead woman before he could have got his senses back! She saw him coming—saw the murder in his blind, staring eyes. She was out of her chair—across the room—her hand on the bell-pull. She was not frightened—even the desperate feeling, which before had kept her unstruggling in his grasp, was gone.

"If you come any nearer," she said, "I shall ring: it's an electric bell, remember, and sounds from garret to cellar."

He stopped short—her perfect calmness acted like a dash of ice water on his frenzy. He could think too; rather, he could listen to what some power, which seemed extraneous to his faculties, whispered like an audible voice. Useless to kill her—no harm done after all; that is, no harm could come to him. Carstoe could prove nothing. Milady even, free, pardoned, as the California journal had this morning told him, could prove nothing, if she wanted revenge. And Carstoe would take no step—this was why he had resigned the agency; but that would be the end. Nothing would come of the matter. Launce Cromlin himself could not hurt him. Bah! plenty of traders could be found, if necessary, to swear they sold him the jewels—swear they bought them in California. He had been a fool to be frightened—overcome! And there that woman stood defying him—knowledge of his vileness, his cowardice written in every line of her marble-like face! How he hated her! How he longed to expose her to some awful torture, some unutterable degradation, which should strike body and soul—leave her incapable to cleanse

either from the stain, and then let her live and be forced to bear it!

"So, so!" he cried. "I understand a few things that were not clear before! You and master Launce hoped to hatch some plot. I know what he has been at—all a failure! But you—I comprehend your little game now: you the pattern of modesty and purity—you so religious and virtuous! You're an infamous woman, and Launce Cromlin is your lover: I know the truth at last."

She still kept her hand on the bell-pull—she neither stirred nor spoke. He went back to the table, and thrust the box of jewels into his pockets.

"When you write to your paramour," he said, "tell him I have discovered it all; tell him if he takes another step, opens his lips, I will commence a divorce suit against you for adultery, and I'll find proofs at any cost. You know what money will do!"

She did not speak—did not move.

"There shan't be any more attempts at decorum and decency between you and me," he went on; "we look at each other just as we are, without disguise. Remember—a word, a single step, and you shall go into Court, and come out of it a woman so infamous that you'll

find no shelter short of that heaven you 're fond of talking poetry about."

He spoke partly because a devil of jealousy really had seized his depraved mind, partly from an idea that he might frighten her into begging Cromlin to be silent if there had been any idea of exposure—most of all, because he was so insane with passion that to hurl the coarse threat at her was a positive delight.

Then he passed out of the room, and Elizabeth was alone.

CHAPTER VII.

"THEN I 'LL TELL."

Two weeks went by, weeks without incident—without a break to the dull monotony in which Elizabeth sat dumbly waiting for the next blow to fall. Fate had not done with her yet—there was more beyond; it would come soon.

Lent had arrived. There were decorously sober festivities to which she was invited: she went. There was the ordinary round of duties: she fulfilled them. She and Vaughan met—never alone. If he entered a room and saw her sitting there in solitude, he retreated. On—on—drifted the days! She could do nothing—nothing! She was not heeding that last disgraceful scene. She was not especially hopeless from this new degradation which had been cast upon her; it was not that. Marguerite—Milady—her sister—hers and Nathalie's—a bond between herself and this woman

whom she seemed now every time she left her house to meet with Vaughan.

It was always as if some voice urged her on to help that unknown sister—as if the peace of departed souls depended upon her doing it—but how? Could Nathalie have aided, she would have gone to her. In spite of the bar between them, the shame and disgrace which separated their lives, she would have acted hand in hand with her as if no Darrell Vaughan existed or had been personally a stranger to her own life; but Nathalie was powerless as herself.

She had written to Mr. Carstoe—that was all she could do—simply asking him to find out anything concerning a woman called Milady, or Marguerite, who had at such a time lived in San Francisco. She put the date which had been on the last cheque sent to Mrs. Murray—gave the name of the bankers from whence it was issued. Having done this, she could only wait, and she had little to hope. It was long since Mrs. Murray had heard of her there. Whither since then the desperate creature might have drifted, God only knew. She felt no horror, no disgust, at the thought of this unfortunate woman. Even the fact itself—separate from the poor girl—the sin, the shame, coming

into her life, did not horrify her as it would once have done. In thinking of it she could fancy what such an idea—the bare possibility—would have been to her in her early youth. She wondered if she had become hardened, her nature coarse, that she had no such shrinkings now.

Pity, that was her only sensation—pity for the wretched, nameless outcast; a readiness to help her; a will to aid, to raise her up. At least she was not to be blamed. However the sins of others might look, there were pleas for this creature which Elizabeth knew the angels themselves must heed.

She went one day to visit an old lame man and his paralytic sister, who had lately fallen under her notice. There is nothing picturesque, nothing romantic, to offer in the way of description. A couple of bare rooms; an old man bending over a shoe-maker's bench, his poor limbs distorted by the tortures of rheumatism, toiling composedly as if each breath were not an effort, each movement a pain. A woman, almost as old, lying on a bed where she had lain for fourteen years, where she must continue to lie till the strange vitality which supported the half-dead frame wore out. The paralysis left the upper part of her body un-

touched; she could talk, use her hands, manage bits of sewing. As she lay propped among the pillows, her lean fingers moved deftly along the seam, and she was humming a hymn in her weak voice which had a touch of youthful sweetness in it, just as certain flowers will retain a breath of perfume even after they have grown withered and sere.

This was the picture that met Mrs. Vaughan's eyes as she entered. Nothing to make a dramatic scene of or write poetry about, as men do in regard to the old-time martyrdoms, which lasted for a few hours only—but God knows! There shall be others than Peter and Paul; others than Catherine and Agnes, and all the shining throng whose history the world has kept, whom we shall see wearing the martyr's palm up yonder in the light; men and women among whom we moved daily in our blindness here, and caught no gleam of the saint's halo which encircled their patient brows.

"It 's nothing but good news to-day, ma'am," old Richard said, with a smile that lighted up his wrinkles like sunshine, as he hobbled after Elizabeth toward the bed.

"Nothing but good news!" repeated old Miriam, looking up at her visitor with eyes that were sweet and solemn as a prayer. They

had received a letter from a nephew long supposed to be dead. The patient couple had taken care of him during his childhood and early youth; he proved a wayward, disobedient fellow, and finally disappeared shortly before Miriam's paralytic stroke. But whatever errors lay in the past he desired to redeem. His wanderings had ended in California; his business was thoroughly established, and he promised that, if it continued to prosper, they should have a visit from him in the course of the ensuing year, and gave the assurance that tangible proofs of his gratitude and affection would not henceforth be wanting.

"I never could believe he was dead," Miriam added, wiping away her happy tears. "He had a good heart always, if he was a bit wild." "Always a good heart," echoed Richard. They had a habit of repeating each other's statements as if there were only one will and opinion between them.

Mrs. Vaughan must read his letter—such a beautiful letter; it had only come two days before—a bank cheque with it; but welcome as that was, the affection and tenderness were still more to the foolish old pair.

"And a newspaper, with a notice of his business—quite grand," Richard said. "Where

is the paper, Miriam? Show it to Madam, she 'll like to see it, I know."

"Of course I shall," Elizabeth said smiling. "The sight of the two old bodies' happiness came like a ray of light to the desolate woman. She was groping in a darkness so profound, life had reached a pass so dismal, so positively loathsome, that to watch their faces and listen to their thankful words was like having a new prop suddenly steady her tottering faith.

Miriam drew the journal from under her pillow, and pointed with pride to her nephew's name among the advertising columns. Elizabeth sat absently turning the paper in her hands while the pair talked. Its pompous title, "The California Clarion," sent her thoughts back to the dreary round in which during the past days they had circled aimlessly like frightened birds.

A paragraph upon the first page caught her eye—just the heading and the opening lines. She dared not look again. She could only gripe the sides of her chair with both hands and struggle with all her might not to shriek. She heard the two voices still; they seemed to come from a great distance. A grey mist gathered before her; she could see nothing distinctly, save the half-open journal which had fluttered into her lap.

Presently she found strength to rise, to speak a few words—bid the brother and sister a kindly farewell.

"I'm afraid the room is close," Miriam said; "the Madam looks very pale, Dick, old man."

"Only a headache," Elizabeth heard herself reply. "I would like to take the paper if you have read it; there is an article I want to look at."

She was out of the room—going down the stairs—so dizzy that it was like descending a precipice. Her carriage waited at the door; she had taken her seat.

"Where to, ma'am?" the footman was asking.

"Home!" O the awful mockery of that word!

The journal was in her hand still; she thrust it out of sight among the folds of her dress; she could not trust herself yet to examine it. The carriage reached her house; it seemed to her she had been making an interminable journey. She was upstairs in her own room, the door fastened, the dizziness and confusion gone, a chill like that of death locking her senses in an apathy which deprived her of the power to feel acutely, only a dull horror and fright

struggling up through the Arctic coldness that froze her soul.

It was all clear at last—not a link wanting in the dreadful chain of evidence. She read an account of the pardon which had been granted to the woman called Milady.

Another specimen of the manner in which justice was administered in our land, said the journal. What motive the governor could have had in his decision was beyond the journalist's conception. But it was the same old story. The law condemned a guilty woman, and a mistaken sympathy, a morbid sentimentalism, set her free to begin a new course of crime. A recapitulation of Milady's trial followed: the charge against her, a description of the jewels, Mr. Carstoe's name, Darrell Vaughan's evidence.

The whole was briefly told, but when Elizabeth finished the paragraph there remained no secret. She understood everything, from Mr. Carstoe's resignation of the agency to Vaughan's mad passion of the morning.

An hour passed; some one knocked. Elizabeth hid the journal, rose and unbolted the door. There are blows so terrible that they leave us outwardly calm; they deaden the soul as a mortal wound does the body. She felt as

if walking in her sleep—found herself wondering if she should soon wake.

Prudence Anderson entered the room. She had come to the town mansion this winter as housekeeper.

"I 'm right sorry to trouble you," she said; "but I want to ask for a little laudanum. Joanna's been bad all night with cholera-morbus, and still has so much pain she can't sleep."

Joanna was a chambermaid, as good as she was ugly, with a fatal propensity for devouring things that agonized her interior. This time she had overdone the business with stale lobster salad, to which she had been treated on the previous evening while visiting a friend with cormorantish propensities like her own.

"Had she not better have a doctor?" asked Elizabeth, able even in this moment to be thoughtful and sympathizing.

"No, ma'am; there ain't a bit of need, the laudanum will set her all right. I 'm sorry for her; but the way she will make a cupboard of her stomach to turn everything into she can lay hands on is too much for a body's patience," Prudence averred. "I expect every day I 'll find her eating a brass door-knob just out of curiosity."

"I will go and see her presently," Elizabeth said.

"Yes, ma'am," returned Prudence; but she still lingered. She looked so anxious and troubled, that Mrs. Vaughan added,—

"Is there anything else the matter?"

Prudence shifted one foot, then the other; turned red and pale, and finally said,—

"Excuse me, do excuse me, Miss Elizabeth!" (She often used the old familiar name when excited.) "Don't take it for a liberty; I ought to tell you! We've been deceived in Mary Liscom; she ought to leave the house."

For the last three weeks Elizabeth had given employment to this young girl as seamstress. It is no matter about the story. She was friendless—over-worked to support an invalid mother and a brutal step-father, until she fell under the notice of the lady who had recommended her to Mrs. Vaughan. A pretty creature; educated beyond the station in which they found her; looking positively elegant in her simple dress. A marvel of delicate contours and wonderful colouring, such as only an American girl can be; with graceful ways, a merry laugh in spite of her hard fate, and sly, mischievous black eyes that brightened her whole face.

Mrs. Vaughan and Prudence invented a quan-

tity of needs in the matter of bed-linen and the like, to give the girl occupation. Elizabeth would not even allow her to take a room in the servants' quarter. She had quite a luxurious little retreat assigned her, with books and a pleasant view from the windows. Elizabeth could not sufficiently sympathize with the girl's pathetic tale. During her father's life she had been comfortably off, petted and loved. The vicious habits of her mother's second husband had dragged them rapidly down, lost a school she had been teaching in Tarrytown, and ruined any hope of her obtaining more congenial employment than that of a needlewoman. Elizabeth trusted later to find her a position as companion to some solitary lady who would be kind to the unfortunate creature.

Within the last week an odd change had come over the girl. She had answered Mrs. Vaughan petulantly, and was more than insolent to good Prudence, and overbearing with the servants.

Just as Mrs. Anderson had begun this complaint, Margot appeared. There were two gentlemen downstairs who wished to see Madam. No; not gentlemen Margot had ever before seen at the house; there was the card.

"Dr. Street," read Elizabeth aloud; then

hospital again—a hospital for nervous patients. Mrs. Vaughan would be interested, he knew, if only he could persuade her to visit it.

Always the bushy eyebrowed man watched her furtively, and had little to say. The doctor now and then brought him into the conversation, but talked too fast for the silent man to take advantage of the opportunity if he wished.

After all, what was the motive for the visit? Elizabeth began to ask herself this as the doctor talked on. He had darted off on a little excursion to Italy, and was waving his plump white hands over the ruins of the Roman Forum, when Elizabeth got to that inquiry in her mind. Did he want money? The affairs of the hospital appeared to be in a wonderfully flourishing condition; but all this eloquence, this circumlocution, this effort to please, must mean money. The doctor returned from Italy, stopping at Westminster Abbey on the road. But what was he saying now, for still it was an effort to keep her thoughts fixed any length of time upon his words? Her father, the late Mr. Crauford—nervousness—peculiar habits—what could he mean?

"Did you know my father?" she asked.

The doctor had never enjoyed that pleasure—that great pleasure; he regretted it deeply!

He was fond of studious men! More compliments, more pretty speeches, and yet, as well as she could understand, he seemed somehow to be building up a theory which connected her pallor and her father's nervousness—the transmission of mental ills; then leagues off in generalities—and the silent man watching!

She had had enough of it, agreeable as the doctor was; one could not think of calling him impertinent, and yet his conversation would have been an intolerable presumption in another. If he would not in his delicacy come to the pecuniary matter, which must be his real errand, she would broach the subject and be done. She had uses enough for more money than she could control; a new duty had just opened—Marguerite! Then a quick impatience came over her. Would he never go—never leave her free to try for a ray of light, some means, some way to set about the solemn task which had devolved upon her?

Before she could speak, Vaughan's name was on the doctor's lips again. He knew her husband! He got away from the fact with the speed of lightning; it had been an accidental admission—the doctor's one blunder; she felt instinctively that he had blundered.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Vaughan,"

she said—the words were a statement, not a question.

The doctor with another wave of his white hands put Mr. Vaughan away off—almost beyond acquaintanceship; but he had seen him, he was forced to admit that. Elizabeth saw the glimmer of a smile on the silent man's lips —gone instantly; but she was in the dark no longer. So far as personal peril was concerned, she knew that never in her whole life had she stood in so black a strait as this present crisis— not even on that morning when her husband's murderous gripe seized her, and his eyes, threatening death, looked into her own. She felt that her face did not change nor her eyes betray, even to the doctor's keen gaze, a glimpse of the discovery which had struck her.

Now he was back at the hospital; his plans, his arrangements, the beautiful grounds; this, that, and the other—no matter what—it afforded Elizabeth an opportunity to say,—

"You interest me very much; I should like to visit the place exceedingly."

While the doctor burst into eloquent thanks —rushed at a clinching of the business by asking her to set a day—Elizabeth, smiling at him, was able with a woman's quickness to study the silent man. She saw a gleam of

satisfaction just as she had seen the passing smile.

Elizabeth Vaughan was physically a brave woman. Her health had always been so perfect that even the suffering of the past years had failed to shake her nerves. Once in her girlhood she had been on a Mediterranean steamer when a fire burst out in the middle of the night. She had been firm and composed as the strongest man on board—had given aid and counsel when most of the passengers and sailors alike were mad with fear.

Just as she had felt at that moment she felt now, and she knew the danger she had run then was less terrible than the present peril. She did not try any more to hurry the doctor. She talked—asked questions too—was cheerful and affable to the last. Very soon she hoped to be able to gratify herself by a visit to the hospital. Name a day? Well, yes; it would be a disappointment if she should miss the doctor. This was Tuesday—say towards the close of the next week. Would the Friday but one be a convenient time to Dr. Street? All days and hours of the doctor's life were at Mrs. Vaughan's disposal. Next week, Friday! Mrs. Vaughan would take the rail at Brooklyn—no journey to speak of! At Longwood the doctor would

meet her himself with a carriage—only half-an-hour's drive to the Retreat. Pretty name, was it not? Suggestive of quiet—rest—all that sort of thing, so pleasant to contemplate by us of the busy nineteenth century, with our high-strung, over-tried, nervous organizations!

"I have no doubt Mr. Vaughan will accompany me," Elizabeth said, after she had duly admired the fitness of the title, looking full in the doctor's face with a smile.

This was positively blissful to hear—a reward to the doctor for the earnest labours of a whole life. He should dream like a poet, prosaic as work had rendered him, of the day which would bring Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan to the scene of his duties. Next week, Friday?

"Next week, Friday," repeated Elizabeth, still smiling.

The physician went out of the room a perfect *feu de joie* of pretty speeches, and the silent man followed, dull and dark as the smoke in the train of fireworks.

Elizabeth hurried into the next room, which gave a view of the street; she wanted to look out of the window and obtain another glance at her visitors. A door that opened into the hall was ajar—the two men were passing it—she

distinctly heard the silent man whisper,—"Who 'd have thought it would be so easy to manage!" and the doctor's whispered response,—"A clear case, a perfectly clear case. Worn-out nerves at the bottom. Sad very sad. But Mr. Vaughan is right; repose —guidance—all she needs. Yes, yes."

A short laugh from the other—they were gone.

As Elizabeth stood there motionless, the partially-open door was swung to; from behind came Prudence Anderson, pale and trembling.

"I 've been in this room all the while," she said, in a choked, frightened voice; "I 've been listening. Do you know who that man was?"

Dr. Street! Elizabeth had recalled her association with the name before the interview ended. The scene of the doctor's labours was a private mad-house on Long Island. Darrell Vaughan did not wish to murder his hated wife, he only meant to confine her to the physician's parental care amid the retired haunts of the Retreat.

"Do you know?" repeated Prudence.

"Yes," Elizabeth answered.

"But you can't understand what his coming means; you couldn't be so quiet!" cried Pru-

dence. "Didn't you hear what they whispered as they went out?"

She caught Elizabeth's dress, as if to protect her.

"I know, I heard," her mistress replied.

"I remembered him the minute I heard his name," continued Prudence. "I knew what it meant—I listened. He couldn't take you off, but I was scared all the same. O Miss Elizabeth, get away—send for help—do something! O don't you understand what is afore you?"

"I understand," Elizabeth returned, calmly as before.

"And you promised to go to the place!"

"That gives me time, at least. I must think—I don't know what to do."

"You must speak out at last!" exclaimed Prudence, with a flash in her old eyes. "You have borne enough; you must save yourself! O don't be angry; I can't keep quiet; I don't mean to be impudent. O Miss Elizabeth, Miss Elizabeth, no woman ever stood in a blacker danger than you do now."

She began to cry and wring her hands.

"Hush, Prudence, it is useless to be frightened; I am not."

"You will go away—you will?"

"I should be no safer; he could follow me," she said.

Prudence was past remembering the difference in their position; she could only recollect that they were both women; that this unfortunate creature must be made to save herself.

"You 've got to speak out!" she exclaimed. "You've got to appeal to your friends—to the law. I tell you there 's a worse danger than murder close by—there 's a mad-house waiting for you! O Miss Elizabeth, my deary, my best, don't wait—don't waste a minute!"

In the agony of her appeal she fell on her knees before her mistress, still holding fast by her dress.

"Let me sit down," Elizabeth said. "Get up, Prudence. Hush, there 's no danger yet! I can't, I can't! I have said there is only one cause that can give me a right to free myself—not suspicion either, not circumstantial evidence—proofs."

She had sunk into a chair. Prudence, still on her knees, held her fast and looked up at her.

"I cannot tell the world, it is bad enough to have even you know, dear soul," pursued Elizabeth.

"You won't go—you won't save yourself?" cried Prudence, in an altered voice.

"I shall tell him that I know—that I am on my guard."

"What good will that be? You'll be carried off—shut up in a mad-house—do you hear, a mad-house!"

"I think not; I shall do my best."

"There's only one way—the law, Miss Elizabeth—the law!"

"Man's law, Prudence!" she groaned. "The Bible only holds one permission; other causes do not give it."

Prudence sprang to her feet.

"Then I'll tell!" she cried. "I've held my peace for a week, but I've known!"

At this instant Mary Liscom's voice sounded at the further end of the hall; she was calling Margot to ask Mrs. Vaughan if she might go out for awhile. Prudence stopped speaking at the tones; when they died she drew closer to her mistress, and added in a choked whisper,—

"Hark! You heard her! Ma'am, ma'am, I've known for a week—even the Bible won't support you in clinging to that man any longer."

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF HIS REACH.

THE iron gates opened with a discontented murmur, as if loth to admit visitors; the carriage passed on up the winding road, and stopped before the house—a fine old mansion, surrounded by spacious grounds, but so solitary, so neglected, that one would have needed to be either very happy or very miserable to tolerate existence there any length of time.

It was toward sunset when Elizabeth arrived. She had left town by an early train, and travelled all day—for many hours amid the gloom of mountain scenery, round dizzying curves, close to the edge of precipices, through black tunnels, up grades so steep that it seemed wonderful the ingenuity of man could have contrived the track, amid the shadow of pine forests odorous with the scents of early spring, musical with the voice of birds and waterfalls—on and on, the way growing more tortuous, the engine groaning like some living

thing tasked beyond its strength. At last the summit was reached, and the road plunged down the descent toward the beautiful valley which lay sunny and bright among the lofty hills, with the Susquehanna winding slowly through its midst, in the very heart of the great Pennsylvanian mountains.

The train stopped at the village station. On the previous day Elizabeth had announced her arrival, so the carriage was waiting. She drove through the bustling streets, across the bridge, and on toward the shadow of the hills where the old house stood. This was Tanglewood—Miss Janet Crauford's place. In her loneliness and desolation Elizabeth had come hither to seek refuge, at least for a time. Miss Janet was the only relative she possessed in the world, and her home seemed the most fitting haven.

Three days had elapsed since into the misery of Elizabeth Crauford's life came the crowning degradation which caused her to fling down her burden—throw off the weight of the galling chains she had worn so long.

She could fix her mind on but one thought—that determination to get away, to flee and cleanse her soul from the impurity about her;

as a wretch suffocated by the stench of a noisome pit might employ the last remnant of his strength to struggle out. To get away —that was the one thought. She could not even pray! For the time, though she did not realize it, she was almost as far from the possibility of Divine help as if she had given voice to anathemas and cursed God and man. To go—to flee! She had reached the point where even the Bible admits that duty ends.

Perhaps the hardest thing of all was the necessity of confiding to human ears the hitherto jealously-guarded secret of her married life. Even in that hour of supreme suffering it was a terrible humiliation to her great pride, but there was no possibility of avoiding it now. She sent for Mr. Howland—she told what was necessary to tell in Darrell Vaughan's presence. It was the first intimation the bad man had received of her full knowledge of his guilt. The case was perfectly clear—if Vaughan offered the least opposition, the law could be called in to protect her. Utter disgrace to him would follow upon exposure, and the circumstantial evidence there was of his having contemplated carrying out that most awful treachery against her with the assistance of the mad-house doctor would, he knew well, in the

hands of an eloquent counsel, make a tale that must blast him for ever.

The scene was quiet enough. I do not describe it, I see no good purpose that such description could serve. Vaughan was sullen, but he could refuse nothing that was demanded, and Mr. Howland's claim went beyond what Elizabeth would have asked, though perfectly just. Mrs. Vaughan's fortune must be restored to the last penny. This was a hard thing to Darrell. During these past years he had become very rich, as we know; his dealings with the Ring had absolutely thrown millions into his coffers; but it was as hard to give up what belonged to his wife as if it left him poor, though in reality he would hardly miss the amount from his dishonestly won treasures.

Elizabeth left the two men together, and the matter was arranged before they separated. Mr. Howland remained perfectly cool; but he would hear of neither compromise nor delay. Vaughan had his choice between restoring the money at once, signing a confession which would render him powerless in any way to trouble his wife for the future, or to stand a trial by law.

"She 'd never do that," he said; "she 's

too cursedly proud. Come, come, Howland, you're going beyond your instructions."

"She will do it if there is no other way to gain her liberty," the other replied. "And I may as well tell you honestly that if she faltered, I should send for Miss Janet Crauford, and she would commence a suit as Mrs. Vaughan's nearest relative. You know enough of that old lady to be certain *she* would not hesitate."

So the man yielded, signed the necessary papers, and Mr. Howland went out of the room to find Elizabeth, carrying the warrant of her freedom in his hand. There would be no exposure, no gossip even. Mrs. Vaughan would go to her aunt—nothing more natural than that she should be required, considering Miss Crauford's age and feeble health. Later she could visit Europe; Mr. Vaughan's business and political duties would serve as an excuse in the eyes of the world for his remaining behind. If gossip and hints did at last arise, at least there would be no scandal. Vaughan need fear nothing so long as he left his wife unmolested; but that he must do. Not even so much as a word or insinuation could he permit himself! The instant that should happen, Mr. Howland assured him

every detail would be made public; and Vaughan knew the man with whom he had to deal.

He hated to give her up; love of power was as strong as his greed for wealth. He hated to see her slip from his hands—to know that he could never torture her again, never visit disappointment or ill temper upon her. With it all he was faithful, like the rest of humanity, to his inconsistency. Even with a mad passion for another woman burning in his soul, this pale, worn beauty of Elizabeth's looked suddenly precious again, now that she had passed out of his reach for ever.

So the end had come. Darrell himself spoke of the visit, and Society thought the proceeding natural and wise. Miss Crauford was old and ailing, and very rich, he said; of course a person to be cared for and cherished, even at the expense of a temporary separation between husband and wife.

Prudence Anderson was going away too; she had no mind to remain in the house, and long years of service had given her a competency which enabled her to seek repose.

Neither she nor Elizabeth forgot the weak, miserable girl who had fluttered to ruin like a moth toward a candle. They did the best

possible for her, hoping, or trying to hope, that her anguish and promises were the result of contrition, not merely the effect of shame at discovery.

The end had come! Elizabeth said that over and over to herself during the days of hurried preparation. Liberty was not precious to her, she had no use to make of it. The future could hold nothing—not even a hope. There would be a round of little duties, years of quiet without rest! Life was so long, and she was young yet! She had often pitied the old for having to sit passive and see others live—no interest, no strong inducement left; and this fate had come upon her, and she was in the fullness of youth and strength.

O it was hard, hard! God was cruel to her—existence a curse! She knew at length that faith itself was slipping from her, and she could not hold it fast, she was too frozen and apathetic even to pray.

All over—the journey accomplished—she had done with the past! The sound of the carriage-wheels brought old Thomas and Jane Flint, her aunt's chief adherents, upon the verandah. Elizabeth had paid a yearly visit to Tanglewood since her return from Europe, so her

arrival excited no surprise in their minds, though she had never before come so early in the season.

It was March now. The sheltered valley was already beautiful with promises of spring. The trees were in leaf, the young grass green upon the lawn, the crocuses and hyacinths brightened the garden walks. Elizabeth paused for a few seconds on the verandah and looked about. The house stood upon an eminence; she could see for miles down the narrow vale. There was a sweep of pasture-lands, groves, and cultivated farms. Pleasant homesteads peeped out here and there. Tiny villages nestled along the valley's length, the river wound like a silver mist through its heart, the blue hills shut in the far distance on every side, and the soft spring sky bent toward them, bright with sunshine and white fleecy clouds. The whole formed a picture of tranquil loveliness, which struck on the confusion and coldness of her soul like an added pain. Thomas and Jane Flint were busy superintending the removal of her luggage into the house—nobody had time to notice her. She had come quite alone—she could not bear, for the present, to see a single face that had been about her in the desecrated home from which she had fled,

so even her maid was left behind. The sun was setting; the amber and pink clouds billowed up in the west; the breeze brought the voice of the river and the murmur of the pines; a thrush, perched in the topmost boughs of an acacia, sang his evening hymn; from the distant farmyard came the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep—all the pleasant sounds of country life which had once been so sweet and full of poetry to her.

It was inexpressibly sad and dreary now, the whole scene. She felt a vague surprise at the beauty and freshness about; the new life and growth of spring. It seemed wonderful that the earth could remain so fair under its burden of human wretchedness. She passed into the entrance-hall, and walked on through the solitary apartments toward a room where her aunt always sat, opened the door, and entered.

Everything looked as she expected—certainly there was no brightness here to vex her weary eyes. The windows gave a view of the shrubberies, which grew neglected and wild; rose-bushes and woodbines trailed over the casements, and helped to shut out the light. For years Miss Crauford had suffered greatly with her eyes, and chosen this gloomy nook

for her special haunt, just because it was shadowy and dark.

Nothing in the cold rigidity of the place had altered, from the old-fashioned chairs ranged in a solemn row against the wall, to the figure that sat in the centre of the room knitting mechanically, yet as assiduously as if a human fate were being woven into the web. Upright and stiff she sat—a tall, gaunt, pale woman, dressed in dull grey, without a speck of colour to relieve its sombreness, hair of the same hue as her dress, a face which looked taciturn and cold, almost grim. There were traces of pain and suffering in every feature, but suffering borne in silence, and with a fortitude which came as much from obstinacy as patience. This was Elizabeth's aunt, old Miss Janet Crauford, who had lived here alone among the shadows for more than thirty years. "Is that you, Elizabeth?" she called as the door opened and the visitor paused upon the threshold. "I heard the carriage, so I supposed you had come. I can't get up—it 's one of my blind days."

The voice was not even fretful; there would have been a humanity somewhat refreshing in that—just cold and emotionless, as if a stone or something entirely beyond the reach of sympathy with this world had spoken.

"Yes, Aunt Janet, I have come," answered Elizabeth, going toward her. "How do you do? Will you kiss me?"

"How do you do, Elizabeth? But I shan't kiss you—you know I never do kiss anybody. You are at home now—you know what to do with yourself. Jane Flint has got rooms ready for you—here is mine when you want to see me. Make yourself comfortable in your own way. Don't expect me to listen to any complaints. From first to last you have chosen for yourself. You married—I suppose to please yourself. Now you have left your husband, to please yourself too, so there 's an end of it. George Howland wrote me all that was necessary for me to know, and there 's never any use in talking over what 's inevitable."

She spoke without the slightest change of tone or emphasis, her fingers never pausing in their task.

"No use whatever," Elizabeth answered; "I am not likely to trouble you with complaints."

"No; that wouldn't be your way; you 're a real Crauford! More than one could say for your father, who liked nothing so much as to get a hurt and cry over it," resumed the passionless tones. "I dare say your husband

was as bad as possible; he wouldn't be a man if he hadn't been."

"I told you I did not mean to complain, Aunt Janet."

"It 's possible you were not perfection, though you would hardly be a woman if you did not think you had been. Just fancy we have droned on for the past few years as we shall do till you are tired of staying, and we shall do well enough; there 's no good in looking back."

"Do well enough!" repeated Elizabeth, mechanically.

"Oh, there 's worse in life than that, dull as it sounds," said Miss Janet.

"Yes, there 's worse than that," replied Elizabeth. "I will go upstairs now."

"Jane Flint will have dinner for you. I dine early, you know."

"I only want some tea," Elizabeth said; "I am afraid I have kept you waiting for that."

"If my hour had come I shouldn't have waited," returned Miss Janet; "it 's not half-past six yet."

Elizabeth went close to the upright woman and kissed her forehead; Miss Janet permitted the caress, but did not return it. As her niece

was moving away, however, she touched her arm with one of her lean, cold fingers.

"I dare say you endured more and longer than most women would have done," she said, in a voice that had softened slightly. "You were never a coward, and you were never weak. But knowing you were right won't make you happy, and my sympathy won't; so things must just stay as they are."

A stranger would have thought her utterly unfeeling, but Elizabeth knew her better. For thirty long years Miss Janet had been an invalid and a misanthrope, but she was not a stony-hearted woman. She believed in few people—professed to doubt all. She simply could not allow herself the luxury of being sympathetic and demonstrative. If she had given way in the least she would have suffered a whole night's physical agony, and she had learned to breathe, eat, move, and sleep by rule, as the only means of avoiding or rendering less frequent the terrible paroxysms of nervous pain to which she was subject. Almost her first words—"It's one of my blind days"—possessed full significance to Elizabeth. She understood that the reading of Mr. Howland's letter—the brief explanation necessary—had shaken Aunt Janet out of her enforced com-

posure, and brought on the usual result of agitation.

"When the old place gets unbearable you 'll have to go away," Miss Janet added, picking up her work again. "There 's little company to be had in the neighbourhood, and if there were I can't bear noises. I 'm a nuisance, of course, but as long as this old machinery insists upon working, out of order as it is, I can't help that. You must endure it while you can, and then go away."

"I have no doubt it will do very well, Aunt Janet," said Elizabeth. "There'll be peace at least."

"Hum!" returned the old maid. "There 'll be quiet enough and dullness enough. Well, well! Now go see what Jane Flint has done for you in the way of chambers, and come back for some tea."

Elizabeth met that important personage, Jane Flint, in the hall, and Jane told her of the dreadful day and night Miss Crauford had passed.

"The least thing upsets her! The very idea of expecting you, I dare say, was enough. But she 's been better since yesterday. I 'm glad you 've come, ma'am, and I hope you can stay a good while; she oughtn't to be so much alone, it 's my opinion."

So even in the first hour of her arrival Elizabeth was able to see that a duty had opened before her, neither dignified nor heroic, but one that needed to be fulfilled — petty, wearisome, as it might sometimes appear, just as important as the framing of monarchies or freeing of peoples; the plan of the universe holds no trifle.

Elizabeth's days settled at once into an unvarying monotony. She rose early, walked in the grounds or rode on horseback, breakfasted with Miss Janet, and devoted as great a portion of the time to her as the spinster would permit.

"I'm not used to being coddled, and too much of it would give me an indigestion," she said, and by that Elizabeth knew she liked her companionship, found pleasure in her ministrations. Life seemed ended, so far as personal hopes and aims were concerned, but there was still something to do for others—not always a pleasure, not always easy, but she did what she could. She would not sit weakly down and lament. She must struggle through the night and find daylight beyond. At least she might gain such reliefs as come to age—resignation and faith; patience to wait till her existence, so blighted, so dwarfed, should

find its resurrection in the sphere beyond this.

Not long after her arrival at Tanglewood she sent for Jean Murray and little Meg. There was a pretty cottage on Miss Crauford's estate which the old lady placed at her disposal, and here she installed the two. The child must be henceforth her care; and without revealing the truth to the Scotchwoman, she put the matter in a light which showed Aunt Jean she had no right to oppose a determination that would offer the girl a future so different from anything her love or care could hope to effect.

Elizabeth waited with great anxiety to receive news from Mr. Carstoe, but no letter came. She knew he would not neglect her mission; it could only be that he failed so far to find any trace of Marguerite, and was postponing his answer until he had some certain information to give.

She had been a month at Tanglewood; it was the close of an April day. Elizabeth had been far up the river in a little boat which she rowed herself, drifting along among the mountain shadows, trying to forget mental weariness and pain in physical fatigue. Lame Dick was not in sight when she rowed her boat to the landing near a gate which gave admittance to

her aunt's grounds. Some one was standing on the shore—a gentleman. He approached as a sweep of her oars sent the light barque up on the sand—it was Launce Cromlin.

He had spoken her name, uttered commonplace salutations, and helped her out of the boat before she could decide whether the meeting was a pleasure or a pain.

"You are surprised to see me," he said; "but I hope not too much so to be glad."

"I supposed you away in Germany or Italy," she answered. "When did you come back from Europe?"

"I did not go, Mrs. Vaughan," returned he. "I have been in California."

"Then you have seen Mr. Carstoe," she said quickly; "you can tell me—"

He interrupted her by a smile and a gesture of his hand. She looked in the direction he indicated, and saw Mr. Carstoe coming toward them round a point of the shore. Elizabeth hurried forward to meet the old man with both hands extended. She had not believed anything could give her a sensation of such pleasure as did the sight of his ugly, honest face lighted up with emotion. The three stood there and talked for a few moments. There were no questions asked her — no astonishment was

manifested. She comprehended that in some way both men had become acquainted with the change which had taken place in her life. She shrank from the idea of publicity, but at least their knowledge would spare her interrogatories difficult to answer. Though both avoided any remark which could trouble her, they talked freely enough of themselves and the affairs which had brought them into her neighbourhood.

A distant relative of Cromlin's, on his father's side, had died a few months previous, and left Launce a valuable mining property near the village.

"As I am not a business-man," Cromlin said, "I persuaded Mr. Carstoe to leave California and come East with me."

"Which means," Mr. Carstoe explained, "that he has offered me a partnership and a chance to realize a competency in my old days."

Cromlin had accompanied his friend into the valley to see him fairly established in the business, and later in the spring meant to start upon his long-deferred journey to Europe. They were living at a house which belonged to Launce, not far from Tanglewood. The place would continue to be Carstoe's home, and it was pleasant to Elizabeth to think she should have the kind old man's companionship. It was

dusk before she remembered that Miss Janet would be waiting for her tea. The two gentlemen walked with her through the grounds, and she invited them to enter the house. She left them in the drawing-room and went to tell her aunt what she had done, though scarcely expecting that she would see the visitors. But during their conversations Elizabeth had often spoken of Mr. Carstoe, and the old lady chose to break over her rule of seclusion and receive him.

"Who 's the other?" she asked. "O yes—Launce Cromlin—Vaughan's cousin; not much in his favour that! But he can come—they can both come if they like; I shan't go to the drawing-room. Ring for lights first, unless you want them to break their necks."

So Elizabeth conducted them to the apartment, and Miss Crauford received Carstoe with a nearer approach to cordiality than she often vouchsafed any one. Then Elizabeth presented Cromlin.

"Hum!" said Miss Janet. "How do you do, sir? If you choose to shake hands with a half-blind old woman, you can. I knew your father long before you were born; he was an honest man, and that 's saying a great deal. I don't suppose you can be like him, for two honest men would be too much to expect in one family.

Launce laughed at the odd speech, took the cold hand she extended, and said,—

"I hope you will try to believe a little good of me for my father's sake."

"I never believe anything," returned Miss Janet. "Just now I want my tea, and so do you, I dare say."

"Yes," Cromlin answered, "I have been sketching all day and ate a cold dinner, so I lay claim to a very unromantic appetite."

"So much the better; I hate romance! Why didn't you turn pedlar instead of artist?"

"On account of the difference in the pack I should have had to carry," he replied, laughing again.

"How old are you?" demanded the unscrupulous spinster suddenly.

"I am thirty," he said quietly, as if the question had been the most ordinary one in the world.

"Thirty, and you can laugh like that! So could your father. Well, it would be odd if you turned out a decent man too."

"At least you will like my laugh?"

"Yes; I have forgotten how, and Elizabeth's—"

"O never mind me, aunt," she interrupted.

"But I do mind!" retorted Miss Janet.

"Elizabeth's laugh sounds like thorns crackling under a pot; the only consolation is, I don't hear it often."

"Shall I ring for the tea, aunt?" asked her niece.

"No; Jane Flint has been punctual for fifteen years; we'll see if she fails at the end."

But faithful to the moment Jane just then appeared with the tray.

As a rule, Miss Janet hated to be helped in any manner, doing everything for herself that her glazed sight would permit; but Cromlin managed to pull the table toward her and make her comfortable in a variety of little ways, without calling forth the reproof which Elizabeth momentarily expected.

He talked pleasantly and well, and made Elizabeth and Carstoe talk also. If Miss Janet did not speak much, she at least refrained from any of the frosty sarcasms wherewith it was her habit to congeal the blood of such luckless visitors as she admitted to her presence.

After a time, Mr. Carstoe found an opportunity to speak alone with Elizabeth.

"I received your letter," he said. "I should have answered it only I knew that I should reach New York as soon as my reply."

"And have you any news for me?"

He had not yet heard from Mrs. Simpson of Milady's disappearance.

He told Elizabeth that Marguerite had a comfortable home; was overlooked by a trusty woman. He thought it better to leave her where she was, at least for the present.

"God bless you!" whispered Elizabeth. "You do not know what a weight you have lifted from my mind."

He looked at her with a great pity in his face, stretched out his hand, drew it back, and lapsed quickly into one of his shy, awkward moods. Elizabeth knew the signs.

"You have something else to tell me," she said.

"Yes—I think I ought; we shall all go on easier it seems to me," he said hesitatingly.

"Tell me."

"Only, that Cromlin saw his cousin in New York. Mr. Vaughan chose to explain to him that—that your absence was likely to be a long one; in fact, that—"

"I saw you both knew," Elizabeth hastened to add. "Yes, it is better."

"You—you feel—how sorry I am—how I would give my right hand if it could serve you—"

"I know," she said, as he broke down again. "You are a good, good man—I thank you. But do not be troubled or unhappy about me; at least I have peace and quiet here. Life looks dark and confused. I seem to be of no use, to have no place; but I try to be patient."

"And there 's all the life beyond," he said softly; "it must come right there—it must."

Then they went back to Miss Janet and Cromlin; the subject was at an end.

At last Jane Flint appeared to conduct the old lady to her chamber. The clock was on the stroke of ten, and nothing short of an earthquake would have prevented military punctuality on Jane's part.

Mr. Carstoe was horrified when he discovered how long a visit they had made, but Miss Janet put his excuses unceremoniously aside.

"If I 'd wished you to go I should have told you," said she. "You 'll always find our tea-table laid at the same hour, and you will be welcome at it just as often or as seldom as you choose to come. That invitation is for Mark Cromlin's son too. Good night everybody! Jane Flint, give me my stick and your arm, and take up the line of march."

Elizabeth walked to the door with the two visitors, and stood absently looking out into

the moonlight as they passed down the road to the gates. Once they turned to look at her, but she did not see them. They spoke very little of her, confidential as they were on most subjects. Neither had expected to find her here—neither had known where Miss Crauford's home was. This new glance into her desolate life, this sight of her pale, beautiful face, with such unrealizable capacities for happiness still visible through its pain, tore both their souls with pity and grief, which it seemed a desecration to mock with words.

The next evening but one Launce called at the house again; Mr. Carstoe was occupied and could not come. Cromlin understood that the one kindness possible was to rouse Elizabeth out of herself. He talked on every subject which could touch her old enthusiasm for beauty and art, and appealed so frankly for sympathy in his own pursuits, that she could not fail to listen. Miss Janet let him converse as unreprovedly as she had done before, and even asked a question now and then, which showed that she was interested.

"Have you no piano here, Mrs. Vaughan?" Launce asked.

"Yes," Miss Janet answered for her.

"There's one in the drawing-room that she sent a couple of years ago."

"It must be sadly out of tune," added Elizabeth. "I have not opened it since I came here."

"There's a tuning-key in that table-drawer, if Mr. Cromlin knows how to use it," said Miss Janet. "Only if you drum, don't do it loud enough for me to hear."

Launce promised not to disturb her, found the key, and insisted on being shown the piano at once; so Thomas was ordered to take lights into the drawing-room.

"I am starved for music," Launce said. "I have not played for weeks, and bits of the 'Songs without Words' have been haunting me all day."

Elizabeth led the way to the drawing-room—in perfect order, thanks to Jane Flint's care, though seldom used, and a degree more old-fashioned in its decorations than Miss Janet's apartment.

"Now go away, please," said Launce. "I don't wish to torture your ears by the tuning process."

Elizabeth left the room and wandered out of the house, walking for a long time in sight of the moonlit river. As she approached the

dwelling, a delicious melody made her pause. Cromlin was playing a strain of Beethoven's—a wild, spiritual movement from one of the sonatas, which sounds as if some spirit newly freed, and still oppressed by the shadows of this world's troubles, were questioning and receiving consolation from a mighty angel.

The chord was struck. Elizabeth sat down in the shadow of the verandah and wept; blessed drops, which refreshed her as tears had not done for months, flowed from her eyes. When she grew calm again she entered the drawing-room. Cromlin had turned down the lamps and opened the windows wide. The moonlight flooded the apartment, and in that heavenly radiance he wakened the hidden life in the cold, white keys till Elizabeth's pulses throbbed in new harmony.

For awhile he neither noticed nor addressed her. At last he turned round from the instrument, saying gently,—

"Has it done you good?"

"Thanks," she answered.

"And to-morrow will you try for yourself?" he continued. "Will you sing for me then?"

She bowed her head.

"I must go now," he said. "I hope I have not disturbed Miss Crauford."

"Miss Crauford is here," replied a voice from the door."

There she stood, upright and grim, leaning on her stick. Jane Flint appeared in the background, with the moon-beams weaving a silvery tracery across her black gown.

"You must be the devil," observed Miss Janet. "I haven't listened to anybody's music in twenty years."

With those words she turned about, took Jane Flint's arm, and marched away.

CHAPTER IX.

"WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER."

Six weeks passed; spring was deepening into summer. There are no words to paint the loveliness of those charmed days, the glory of those azure nights, the weird melodies the river sang as it hurried away beneath the shadow of the cliffs, the marvellous beauty which wrapped the mountain valley in its glow.

Launce Cromlin still lingered, though the time he had set for his departure had come and gone. Mr. Carstoe was greatly occupied, full of interest and enthusiasm for his new business —delighted to keep Launce's society as long as he might.

Cromlin's daily presence at Tanglewood had become a matter of habit. Miss Janet herself seemed to think it the most natural thing in the world to see him there. He wandered with Elizabeth among the hills; he talked to her while he sketched; read sweet poets when they paused to rest; and evening after evening

made the piano talk inspiringly to her tired spirit. He persuaded her to sing in her rich contralto voice till her own pain was hushed under the harmony, and his soul floated, all unaware, further and further into a charmed realm.

No tidings from the world without came to rouse them; there was nothing to break the quiet. Even in the man's mind there was not a breath of consciousness; the sympathy which bound them had no sex. It was the free communion of two kindred souls, who had put earth aside,—as may happen to certain natures for a brief season,—and met without restraint in the beautiful land whither their feet had unwittingly strayed.

So time went on.

One evening he did not appear at the usual hour. Elizabeth walked up and down the long verandah, sat for a brief space at the piano, playing snatches of the melodies she had caught from him, oppressed by a vague restlessness which was not pain—O, as unlike the Elizabeth of these later years as if her soul had gained its resurrection, and stood, too bewildered and entranced to think, upon the shore of the Infinite.

A step roused her. Old Miss Janet stood by

the piano, peering into her face with those dim, yet watchful eyes.

"I am going to bed," were her first words. "My back aches! It will rain in just two days. I shall keep my room till it is over."

"Can I do anything for you, aunt?" Elizabeth asked.

"Nothing but let me alone. My back is mine and I'm my back's; if it wants to ache, it must and shall."

Elizabeth's white hands strayed idly over the keys.

"Humph!" said Miss Janet suddenly. "Elizabeth Crauford!"

"Well, aunt?"

"Have you made up your mind to do what another woman would have done long ago?"

"I don't understand," Elizabeth said, puzzled, yet startled by the odd speech.

"Have you decided to get a divorce?"

"What do you mean? How dare you?" she exclaimed.

"I neither say I would or wouldn't," pursued Miss Janet; "the law permits, and other people do it. I only asked if that was what you meant."

Elizabeth's hands dropped in her lap; a ghastly pallor spread over her face.

"Aunt Janet! O Aunt Janet!" she moaned.

Reproach, sudden consciousness, an awful terror—all these emotions were in her voice.

"If you don't," continued the spinster, "play no more Beethoven, and show your painter the way out of the valley. Now my back and I will go to bed."

She left the room, closing the door behind her.

Elizabeth slid slowly forward in her seat till her head rested upon the keys. These words had been a lightning flash which showed her soul where it stood.

A voice called—"Elizabeth!"

She looked up. In the open window stood Launce Cromlin. One glance at his face was enough. He too had heard.

"Elizabeth!" he repeated. The tone was nearly a whisper now, trembling with emotion akin to the terror which shook her, but a great joy quivered through it.

He came slowly toward her. She could not move; could only look into his face with dumb perplexity and fright.

"God is my witness that I never thought," he went on, "never once—not a feeling in my heart that you could blame; and I thank Him for it."

He stood leaning heavily on the piano, and looked down at her.

"I seem to have lived a whole life since she spoke," he went on; "a whole life. It all looks so different. I was so used to seeing you bound, shackled, helpless, in the purgatory where you had been dragged, that I forgot you were free—free!"

The wild joy lighted his face anew, and made a heaven in his eyes that gazed straight into her own.

Then through her confusion and blindness she heard his voice still. He was telling the story of their first meeting, when she had not seen his face—telling the story of the treachery which had separated them so long. After the first instants of pain and fright there was a season—she could never tell whether it lasted minutes or hours — during which the whole material world passed out of sight, and no sound or thought save that man's voice and his glowing words could reach her.

"In the sight of God you are already free; man's law will make you equally so before the world. O Elizabeth! you do care—you know it now! Ah, let us be happy. Have pity on yourself as well as me. Think of all you have

suffered. Do not reject the happiness which opens before us at last."

The solemn words of the marriage service rushed to her lips, not from any direct volition, but as if some unseen influence had uttered them through her,—

"'What God hath joined, let not man put asunder.'"

"It is not you who have done it, Elizabeth. That man has wrought all the sin; but his acts leave you as free as though he had never cast his shadow across your path. The sin would have been in continuing his wife after he had broken every vow, and made marriage void and null. But his wrong-doing cannot wreck your whole life; that would be bearing punishment for him. You are more widely separated than if death had parted you—free to choose your own path, free to claim the happiness which every human being has a right to expect."

"I cannot think," she moaned. "All the old landmarks are swept away. God help me, I have no guide, nowhere to cling!"

"Take my hand, Elizabeth—trust yourself to me! My great love could not misguide; believe in it, cling to it, and it shall be a light to show us across these mists into a new world."

It had come upon her so suddenly—it was as if she had been lifted bodily into a new sphere; she could not think. He was telling her of the future that lay before them—he was opening his heart and revealing the treasures of love hidden there. He employed every argument which his eloquence could furnish to prove to her that in the sight of God and man she was free.

Verily there was reason, there was a show of right under it all.

Heaven itself could not demand the sacrifice of a whole life to a bond which sin had deprived of sacredness. It was only a broken shackle which galled her heart and held her a prisoner by her own weakness, since with a single effort she might wrench it away, sweep every trace of the past aside, and enter a future as completely separated from it as if she had indeed reached a new cycle of existence.

It was not these arguments which moved her most. She listened, and tried to believe when he told her that God gives every human being a right to happiness; that the blind superstition which could make her still cling to the wreck from which every hope, every living thing had gone down, was madder, more

fanatical than the frenzy which induces the Indian woman to cast herself upon the funeral pyre of her husband—it was none of these things that touched and swayed her.

But when he talked of her as his wife, painted their future as it should pass honoured by the world's sanction, and rendered so beautiful by their love, it seemed as if heaven opened to her sight, and she had but to extend her hand to be raised for ever into its glory.

And she loved him—she realized this too! Not the affection a young girl gives, which is half from the necessity of loving that belongs to extreme youth, half made up of dreams and ideal imaginings; but the love of a soul matured by suffering. The love of a heart gentle and womanly in spite of all thwarting influences, which recognized its likeness in the man beloved, and sprang up eager to grasp its long-delayed bliss.

What wonder if her first impulse was to snatch at this promise of peace, crying out with him that she had a right—a right to claim it! Think what her life had been! Remember how the dream of her girlhood was torn away—not dispelled slowly, but rudely crushed—without warning—every heart-chord strained, every good feeling shocked; vice and sin bared

to her shrinking gaze, forced ruthlessly upon it, till the last trust in humanity died out, and she flung herself down among the ashes of her ruined offerings, and called upon the desecrated altars to crush her.

Remember the horrible years—and now their contrast! A contrast offered so suddenly, so utterly without warning, that she had no time to steel her soul by a thought of former creeds, of doctrines held sacred even by a prayer, God help her!

The old life, with its clouds from spent tempests, its ruins, its pale corpses, its charnel-house odours—not alone securely shut out, but hurled resolutely into the tomb of the past, as far beyond any possibility of contact with her future as that existence which we sometimes fancy was ours before this sphere claimed us.

Was it strange that she faltered—was it unnatural? Was it to be wondered at if she caught at the theories which possess much reason and weight in regard to the carrying out of which we have no right to judge where individual instances are concerned, however we may disapprove of them in the abstract?

And he was saying,—

"Let me think for you—trust yourself to me; put your hands in mine, and let me lead the way."

Many women in this strait would have done so blindly, and, perhaps, have reproached the man afterwards. Elizabeth could not act thus. As in the future, if she accepted this new destiny, she would take courageously a full share of the blame, if blame there were, so in the contemplation of that act she must exercise her own judgment, and walk side by side with him supported, not led. She could remember this, confused as her brain was.

"The acts necessary to free you from your trammels are no more in reality than a law process to enable you to procure any other property withheld from you; and what you claim is your freedom, your life!"

It was strange, but his very arguments brought up with new force the beliefs which had always been hers.

"'What God hath joined, let not man put asunder,'" she repeated.

"But the bond is broken—you are free. You do not consider that man your husband?"

"No, no!"

"You would not, under any circumstances—no matter if he repented, if he tried to atone—believe it right to return, and live with him after his sin has annulled your marriage?"

"No, never!"

"Then you are free! The scruples which would make you hesitate are dead, without power in the mind of any liberal man. The very warning pronounced by Christ against the offending husband or wife,—the injunction that he or she put away for sin is forbidden to marry,—proves that the innocent one is free in every respect."

Then he ceased to argue. He was telling her again of the life that should be theirs—the sweet haven of rest—the new day! There was his stronghold; more potent far than all his arguments.

"We would travel, Elizabeth—not among the ruins of the old world—we are sick of men and their follies! Such journeys into the far West—out on the boundless prairies, and farther on, the healing wind of the mountains! And the tropical scenery you love so much. O we will find that out first! Don't you remember that description we were reading the other day of the old Chilian city? We shall have one of those picturesque houses at the foot of the hills with the sea in front—just we two in the world alone."

It was no longer as a possibility that he spoke of these things—it was the present time in his excitement.

"Think of the long golden days—the nights with such moonlight as they saw in Eden—sharing every pleasure, every task—our lives growing always more closely into one, till even death could not separate us, but needing either, must claim both."

Could she think—was reflection possible? She only looked into his face, and in all the world there was no sight but the glory of his eyes, no sound but the music of his voice.

"You will go, Elizabeth! Think—every day wasted is so much happiness lost! Eternity itself can never give back an hour of neglected bliss—you will go!"

The scent of the tropical wind seemed to dizzy her brain; she heard the waving palm-trees whisper of peace and rest. The low rush of the sea bade her follow him.

"Come, Elizabeth, come!"

The very words the blessed palms and the silver sea had uttered,—"Come, come!"

And her whole soul was lost in a wild longing to float away over the molten billows into the new world, the fadeless Eden! Only one thought, one feeling, that overwhelming wish to be gone—at once: not to have time for fear or doubt—away into the shadow of the palm

trees, and within reach of the syren voice of the silver sea!

It had grown very late. The house was so still that it seemed as if they were solitary in the world. The full radiance of the moon lay about them like a promise of peace, and still Launce Cromlin talked with the force and power a man possesses when heart and conviction inspire his words.

And it was so; for the time every argument was truth to him.

Elizabeth was torn and weak from emotion; a thousand diverse thoughts tugged at her soul and left her powerless.

"Only go away to night," she pleaded. "Give me time—only a little time."

He saw how pale and worn she was, and took pity on her. He did not even offer to touch her hand.

"Good night," he said softly, and was gone.

She did not know how she reached her chamber—could not tell whether the hours that intervened had brought sleep or insensibility; but when the early summer dawn flashed into the sky she was lying on her bed, gazing straight before her; every sense stupefied, every limb rigid, as if she had just wakened from a cataleptic trance.

Then a dull, cold pain stirred at her heart, like a benumbed snake warming into vitality and slowly uncoiling itself—grew sharper and hotter, till every fibre of her frame responded with physical agony to the suffering in her soul.

Through the closed curtains brighter gleams of daylight shot in and troubled her by their curious glances. She shrouded her face in the counterpane and tried to sleep, but there was no Eastern drug which could have lulled her to repose.

At last Jane Flint's niece Hannah knocked at the door, as she had been bidden each morning to do. Elizabeth had just sense and strength enough to answer that she was unwell, and should not leave her room that day. Then she was left to herself once more.

Without sleep to bring forgetfulness, without a tangible thought on which to steady her mind, the morning dragged away. Later, she heard steps on the verandah. Her room was at the front of the house, and every nerve had become so overstrung that her hearing was painfully acute. She knew that Launce had come; she heard his voice in parley with old Thomas, then his retreating steps.

More hours of mad restlessness! At last her

soul fastened upon one word Launce had spoken, and clung to it as if it had been an anchor. His wife—his wife! Only that; but the words were a spell which deadened pain and raised a magic barrier against thought.

At length the nervous tension gave way, and she sank slowly to sleep with those blessed words upon her lips.

The sun was setting when she woke. Hannah had entered the room, and stood near the bed; she and Jane Flint had grown alarmed.

"Are you better, ma'am?" the girl asked.

Elizabeth looked at her wonderingly. She could not recall her dreams, but it seemed as if her soul had been absent from her body, and that it was with a struggle it returned.

Hannah opened the curtains and shutters, and the dull red of evening, precursor of a storm, streamed across the chamber.

Elizabeth rose and began to dress—slowly, wearily—like a person recovering from a long illness.

"I shall bring you some tea and something to eat," Hannah said. "Miss Crauford's in bed too; she won't get up, though there ain't much the matter."

By the time Elizabeth was dressed the girl

returned with the tea and such edibles as Jane Flint thought might please her.

It was growing twilight when she descended to the drawing-room. Thomas had only lighted the lamps in the hall, and they cast just radiance enough into the apartment to make a pleasant gloom. Elizabeth lay down on a sofa, and remained listening to the rising swell of the wind and the angry murmurs of the river.

For a long time there were no other sounds, but the outer door opened at length. The rush and whirl began anew in her mind, and the physical pain responded to it as before.

Launce Cromlin entered, and stood for a moment looking about among the shadows. He saw her, and hurried towards the couch. She put up her hands as if in sudden fear.

"You are not afraid of me!" he said, sadly. "You are ill; how wrong I have been! Let me sit here; I'll not distress you by word or look; at least accept my companionship in your loneliness!"

He drew a chair close to the sofa and sat down, talking kindly and gently, till gradually a sensation of delicious rest stole over her tired soul. It was not until he rose to go that he made even an allusion which could disturb her.

Then he said,—"We will not think; we will not question! For a few days let us be quiet here, away in this charmed land where the world cannot reach us."

She accepted his verdict for the time; rest and sleep came that night.

She only saw her aunt for a few moments during the next day. Miss Janet still kept her bed, though the storm had passed, and she confessed that her back was no worse than usual.

"I'll get up to-morrow," she said. "Let me alone, else I shall turn rusty and cross."

Toward sunset Launce came to the house and persuaded Elizabeth to walk a little way. They stood by the river and watched the gorgeous lights pale on the mountains. The twilight floated down; that glory which is neither of night nor day rested on all things; and amid its quiet they returned to the old house, standing up under the gloom of the cedars.

Launce talked; he played her favourite melodies; and distinctly through both, so blending with his words and music that each seemed to grow out of the other, she heard the soft whispers of the palms, the tender murmurs of the southern sea.

"Elizabeth!" he said suddenly.

There was a tone of inquiry in his voice that brought her wholly back to the present. The question which rose in her mind was the impulse of the moment—she had not been thinking, had not meant to ask it, but it was on her lips.

"Have you always believed in divorce?" were the words.

Cromlin grew a little pale.

"I have always believed that, under certain circumstances, it became a sin for a woman to remain in bondage—for a man to hold to the unfaithful wife," he replied.

"Have you always believed it right for the injured husband or wife to marry again?"

"I had never thought it clearly out," he said tremulously; "nothing had ever brought the matter home to me."

"One creed or the other you must have held," she replied slowly, and her voice was low and firm. "You never did believe it right; you have answered me."

"But I do!" he cried. "I have no doubt! The Romish Church has again and again granted divorce—our own Church permits it. Ask the best friends you have—Mr. Carstoe, your aunt. They—"

She interrupted him by rising from her seat. Her face was like that of a dead woman. He could scarcely believe it her voice which answered.

"I must ask my God," she said. "I had forgotten—O, I had forgotten!"

She was gone before he could speak or move.

Elizabeth was alone in her chamber. The moon had been shut out—the lamp lighted. The commonplace aspect of the spot seemed to bring her back from the world whither she had wandered, down into the finite again.

She was on her knees by the table. The open Bible lay before her. As if some unseen agency guided her hand, she turned the very pages that held such counsels as might befit the strait wherein she found herself.

It was an altered face now which bent above the sacred volume; out of it looked a soul that the angels must have pitied and pleaded for.

Up through the stillness went a low sob, which bore a breaking heart on its tone, and Elizabeth, grovelling on the floor, tugged at her breast in blind agony, as if to tear out the crushed heart which murmured so.

The spasm passed. Tears came—prayers; but the angels must have guarded her still, or

she could not have escaped with both life and reason from that awful night.

It was almost daylight when Elizabeth sat at her table with the letter to Launce complete under her hand. There were no tears now, no struggles; they belonged to the life that had died this night.

I have told you all briefly. You will ask me what helped her, what gave strength for the sacrifice? Neither human reason, nor a conviction of right nor wrong, only faith in God and help from the Saviour, whom every one of us, at some crisis of existence, has been tempted "to crucify anew."

This was the close of her letter:—

"If I obtained my freedom only to marry one I love, how would my sin be less than that man's? I should only be trying to give to my acts a lawful covering which might show fair to the world and hide my guilt.

"I have said that I cannot argue upon this point. I do not even say that to those who can believe, divorce may not be pardonable in the sight of God as it is in the eyes of many good, just men and women. For myself, I can only cling to the one way open to me. Life is for ever, the suspense here a brief one. I cannot cloud the happiness which may be

ours in some existence our spirits shall reach at length. I think to save your soul I could give my own. O, I know I could! I cannot lose my soul and yours. I must go.

"I am calm, calmer than I have been in years. Another man would upbraid—think harshly of me—not you. O Launce, you know it is right—the one way! Somewhere in eternity, Christ Himself will tell us why it had to be."

In the grey of the early morning Janet Crauford was wakened by a cold hand laid upon her arm, and a voice like that of the dead, crying,—

"Wake up, wake up!"

There Elizabeth stood, prepared for a journey. It needed but a few words to tell her story.

"I am going away at once. He will obey me, he will not stay here. When he is gone I shall come back. Try to love me a little. Help me to reach toward the light. Aunt Janet, Aunt Janet! O my God, my God!"

Then a brief silence, then her voice again,—

"'*Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice.*"

It was the cry of her breaking heart going up to God out of the darkness.

Then Aunt Janet was alone.

CHAPTER X.

NO HOPE.

It was Mr. Carstoe who received the letter Elizabeth had written to Launce. The old gentleman had breakfasted alone this morning —Cromlin did not appear. Mr. Carstoe was standing on the porch smoking a matutinal pipe before setting out for the mine. His horse had come up; Cromlin insisted on life being made easy and comfortable in every way to the good man.

But these last days had been full of unrest to Mr. Carstoe. Like most reticent people, he was observant of the persons dear to him; and old Miss Crauford, with all her shrewdness, had been less quick than he to discern the secret which so long remained unsuspected by Launce and Elizabeth themselves.

Like many of our generation, even among the good and wise, Mr. Carstoe believed in the justice of divorce on the grounds permitted in the Bible; believed too that the sentence pro-

nounced upon the guilty husband or wife, implied a permission to the offended one to form new ties.

He had known persons who had done this—men and women whom he liked and honoured; and had never disapproved or even thought much about the matter. Yet when his mind suggested the possibility that Elizabeth Crauford might thus act, he was filled with pain and regret. In his estimation she ranked so far above ordinary humanity, that a freedom of action which he would have considered justifiable in another seemed unworthy her. But it was hard—he said this over and over to himself, with a tender pity for both Launce and her. It seemed a horrible thing that the sin of a bad man should wreck two lives still in the freshness of youth and vigour. Vaughan's crime had so completely cast him out of all possibility of contact with Elizabeth's existence, as if the gulf that yawned between them were the black eternal sweep beyond purgatory and heaven. If he were to repent—to atone so far as in him lay—Elizabeth could never be his wife again. Even if his cruelty had not tired her heart out before that crowning guilt separated them, the guilt would remain the same impassable barrier. If she

had loved him still, she could not have gone back, as she valued her soul's safety, as she believed in the teachings of her religious faith, save as a sister, to guide him, help him, hold him up.

But the man had not repented. There was no hope, humanly speaking, that he ever would wish to turn from the slough and the mire; and she did not love him. In her girlish purity, ignorance even, she had been attracted by an ideal to which she gave this man's semblance—nothing more. Mr. Carstoe understood the whole history as well as if it had been put in words. Had Darrell Vaughan not broken the bond which bound them, Elizabeth would have struggled on to the end of life with patience and resignation, her heart so crushed and shut in under its heavy load that the possibility of happiness with another would never have crossed her soul. A thought, a dream, which would then have been wrong, would never for an instant have shadowed the whiteness of her spirit. She was incapable even of feeling the temptation which—God help them! —has come close to more than one wretched husband or wife, sunk in the most horrible solitude—that of a marriage which possesses neither affection nor sympathy.

But she was free—free in the eyes of God and man, Mr. Carstoe considered. She had no husband. He was gone, lost—swallowed up in a hell black as ever Calvinistic doctrine devised for the world beyond this. She had a right to call upon the law to cancel the shattered bond. Had physical death overtaken Vaughan, the law would have commanded her to let it certify thereto before his burial. She had a right now to command the law to give witness to his moral death. She was a widow; no more doubt of her privilege to marry again, if she so willed, than in the case of any other widow.

Yet after Mr. Carstoe had gone over and over the whole round of argument—acknowledging its justice, perfectly convinced of its utility—the pain at his heart remained when he thought of Elizabeth thus acting. She was like a haloed martyr, a saint—something fairly superhuman in his eyes. He could not bear to have the spiritual height whereon she stood troubled by a single earthly shadow.

So, as he lingered this morning, absently watching the beautiful landscape, and musing upon these matters, old Thomas came up the garden walk, and gave him a letter.

Carstoe asked after Miss Crauford and her

niece. He never uttered the other name which still clung to her if he could avoid it.

Miss Janet was well, Thomas said. Miss Elizabeth had set off on her journey by the early train. Thomas hoped she would not stay long with her old governess, whom she had gone to visit, for the household needed her sorely, and Miss Janet most of all.

Not a question did Mr. Carstoe ask; in no way did he betray that this departure was a surprise. His heart gave one mighty bound as he turned indoors. He comprehended what her going meant. In another instant he could feel only pity for her and Launce. He understood Cromlin's restlessness during these past days. Everything was clear. He knew that Elizabeth had made her decision—had won her martyr's palm. "*Whoso loseth his life for My sake shall find it again.*"

Still the old man could have wept from sympathy and tenderness. It was so hard—so hard! They were both young still, and they deserved happiness. Then inconsistent as humanity always is, his loving heart cried out that it could not be right; God could not desire such sacrifice! But Elizabeth's face rose before him in its patient beauty, and the yearning and rebellion died.

He opened the envelope. It contained a sealed letter, and a few lines addressed to himself.

"Give him this," Elizabeth wrote, "and O, comfort him, dear friend; he will need it. I have no necessity to explain to you; but you will help him, I know you will."

If ever a human being sent his whole soul out in prayer for those dear, it was Sheldon Carstoe, as he stood in the darkened parlour holding those papers in his hand.

He bade a servant take the letter to Cromlin's room, and went away. His innate delicacy taught him that this was no time to intrude—the first agony must be borne without mortal aid.

It was dusk when he returned to the house. Mrs. Clement, his housekeeper, informed him that Mr. Cromlin had just come in and was up in his room. He had been out all day, she said. She was afraid he had walked too much, for he looked very pale and tired.

Mr. Carstoe mounted the stairs, knocked softly at Cromlin's door, and was bidden to enter.

Launce sat by a table, his face buried in his hands. He raised his head as Mr. Carstoe appeared, and said, with a ghost of his pleasant smile,—

"She has told you—she says you will help me, and I must let you try, for it is all I can do to prove that her every wish is my law."

A very foolish old man was Sheldon Carstoe, when one remembers that he had lived fifty-five years in this most realistic of centuries! He went up to Launce, laid both hands on his friend's shoulders, and the great tears streamed down his withered cheeks.

"I can't feel it, I can't be satisfied!" Launce exclaimed. "But I don't blame her now. I have been fighting all day with a legion of devils, but I don't blame her now."

Mr. Carstoe patted his arm, and fondled his cold hands as if he had been a child, this white, stern-faced man, with the impress of an unutterable agony on every lineament.

"I know she is right," he continued, "but I can't feel it. I think if I live to be a hundred I shall never feel it; but all the same she is right. You must tell her to come back—she will not find me here; we shall never meet again in this world — O Carstoe, Carstoe!"

CHAPTER XI.

TOGETHER.

TEN days had passed. It was a lovely June afternoon.

Little Meg sat on the grass beneath the walnut trees in front of the pretty cottage where she and Aunt Jean lived.

Below the house the tall chimneys of Tanglewood rose among the trees; beyond spread the sweep of the valley. Above the dwelling the road curved suddenly down toward the river; great cliffs towered frowning and dark, crowding themselves almost to the water's edge.

It was a fair, peaceful spot, and in her childish fashion Meg fully appreciated its beauty. The country air had already done her much good; she looked fresher, her colour brighter, and she was growing tall.

She had seated her dolls on moss thrones at the root of one of the great walnuts, put their table and tea-things before them, and they

were supposed to be enjoying a ceremonious feast; and Meg was certain they understood the whole matter just as well as herself. She talked to them, and confided her small secrets, and they talked—yes, indeed, and laughed too! Commonplace grown-up mortals might perhaps have watched the waxen ladies carefully and caught no word or smile; but Meg was not so stupid; she understood their language without difficulty.

The birds sang; the butterflies flitted past; the rabbits scuttled away through the grass; the bees hummed by; the white clouds cast long shadows over the lawn; the river murmured softly; the whole made up an enchanted scene of whose marvels Meg never wearied.

She left the queens at their tea, and wandered off down the winding path, to watch a troop of little yellow butterflies that were circling about in the sun, looking like flecks of sunlight themselves. Meg, with her head full of a fairy story Elizabeth had told her, was inclined to believe the winged creatures the very knot of elves which, according to Elizabeth's legend, transformed themselves into the bright-hued insects during the hours when mortals are awake and watchful.

But the butterflies floated away on a sudden breeze that sighed down from the mountains, fragrant with the odour of pine-trees and wood-flowers, and Meg was next attracted by a great sweet-briar which grew close to the gate, and had burst into full blossom since the previous day.

While she stood there, looking out from the thicket of flowers, a woman came along the road which led from the village, past Tanglewood and the cottage, and curved here toward the river, following the course of the stream for miles and miles above the valley.

Meg made a lovely little picture framed among the shining green leaves and pink blossoms. She was singing, in her clear, childish voice, just from sheer happiness, a melody that had no rule or words, yet was musical and sweet—a chant such as one often hears from childish lips, making one marvel if it be not a memory of the strains the angels used to sing to them in some brighter world than this, to which their tiny feet have strayed.

The woman caught sight of Meg standing there, and paused. She was thin, wasted and worn, but there were traces of wonderful beauty in her face still. She stood and watched the child, and a great eagerness and longing

brightened the sullen gloom of her eyes. A kind of awe, almost a fear, struck her too, one would have said; for she made a movement forward, then checked herself, and sat down upon the grass, hiding her face in her hands—not weeping, though her whole frame shook with the convulsive sobs that heaved her bosom.

Meg looked out, and saw her sitting there among the daisies. She had been too kindly treated always to know anything about shyness. She pushed open the gate which happened to be unlatched, and went close to the woman, who had not noticed her approach. "Don't cry," she said softly; "don't cry!"

The woman raised her head—the eager, yearning expression swept over her face again —the look of awe, of dread, appeared too. She pressed her hand against her heart. Her breath came and went in gasps. Her pallor took a livid, bluish tint, and she leaned heavily against the trunk of a sycamore by which she had seated herself.

"Don't be frightened," she managed to say. "I'll be better in a minute."

She was better before Meg had time really to become alarmed.

"Don't you want something?" the child

asked, with the practical common-sense which was already one of her strong characteristics. "I could call Aunt Jean, or fetch you some water."

The woman caught her dress, and held it fast.

"Don't call anybody," she said; "I'm better now."

"You might go into the house and rest," Meg suggested.

"No; I like to sit here. Will you sit down too?" Her voice had grown very soft and sweet. As Meg looked at her again, she wondered why at first she was a little startled by the stranger's eyes; they did not flash and burn now, they were misty and sad.

Meg sat by her, quite ready to be communicative, and entertain the lady to the best of her ability. She was dressed in black, Meg's quick glance noticed—Aunt Jean had told her that was a sign people had lost friends.

"Maybe you had a little girl once," said Meg, putting her thought into words at once, and pointing to the stranger's gown. The child could not have explained her fancy to herself; but she comprehended without understanding, that the eager, yearning expression of the pale face bent upon her spoke the language of pain and regret.

The woman turned away her head for an instant.

"Yes, I had," she answered.

"And you've lost her?"

"Yes—I've lost her; yes."

"I'm so sorry," said Meg; "so sorry."

She put out her little hand, and slipped it into the stranger's. The woman let the dainty fingers lie on her palm, looking down at them with a sort of wistful wonder.

"You're sorry," she muttered; "you're sorry!" Then aloud,—"Will you tell me your name?"

"O, I'm little Meg, and I live with Aunt Jean in the cottage, and Elizabeth lives in the great house yonder."

"Who is Elizabeth?" asked the woman.

"O, she's so beautiful—I love her so!" cried Meg. "She's got another name—I can't think—she said I might call her Elizabeth. It was she brought us here to this place to live—it's a nice place, isn't it?"

"Yes, very nice," the woman answered absently. "And—and you haven't any mother?"

"No," said Meg; "but I've always had Aunt Jean. Don't you think you'd better go into the house, and see Aunt Jean?"

"No; I like to sit here. I am going away presently."

"Do you live near?" Meg asked.

The stranger shook her head.

"That's why I've never seen you," said Meg. "But I really think you'd better go and see Aunt Jean—you don't look well. She's got all sorts of things to take. I help her gather the roots, and she always knows just what to do for people."

"She couldn't do anything for me," sighed the woman; "I'm past help—past help."

Meg looked at her, troubled more by the tone than the words.

"I'm so sorry," she said again, with her beautiful childish eyes full of pity. "Are you going back to your home—is it far?"

"My home?" said the woman. "O, yes—very far; I'm going towards it, though, fast enough," she added with a bitter laugh.

"I'm afraid you aint happy," sighed Meg. "I wish Elizabeth was here."

"I don't want to see any one but you," replied the woman.

"I wish I had my white frock on; I've a beautiful one Elizabeth gave me for Sundays," said Meg; "but it's only Wednesday now."

"You're very fond of that Elizabeth,"

returned the woman, with a kind of irritation in her voice.

"O my, yes; and so is Aunt Jean; she's so good. But she's not home now; she's gone away for awhile, and there's nobody but Miss Crauford. I'm afraid of her."

"Who—what was that name?" asked the woman, quickly. "Is Elizabeth's name Crauford?"

"Yes, but something more; she's married, only I don't know where her husband is."

The stranger pressed her hand hard upon her heart again, and fought against the new spasm which seized her.

"You'd better come and see Aunt Jean. How pale you look again!" Meg said, watching her.

The woman shook her head. She could speak presently.

"I can't, child; I can't! I am going away. I want to take the next train, and it leaves soon."

"Yes, I know; it's the six o'clock—O, what is the word? Express!" cried Meg, with pride. "Mr. Carstoe told me the name."

"Great God!" exclaimed the woman. "Is Mr. Carstoe here too?"

"O, to be sure," said Meg; "and Mr. Launce was here, but he's gone. I like him, but I like

Mr. Carstoe too; he took me up to the mine in his waggon."

"They're all good to you, and you love them all?" returned the woman. "You'll not miss me."

"O, I'd like to have you stay, and so would Aunt Jean, I know," said Meg. "But perhaps you'll come back again soon?"

"I don't know; I've something to do; I must go and do it," said the woman, looking away from Meg, while the sombre fire blazed in her eyes again. "I must do it, and I will."

Meg did not hear the words; but the voice was so fierce, low as she spoke, that the child shrank back.

"O don't be afraid of me—don't!" cried the woman passionately, sinking on her knees.

"No, I won't; I'm not," faltered the little girl.

"It's no use to stay; I've seen her. I wanted to see her," said the woman, under her breath, with her great eyes intently studying Meg's features. "There's no curse on her; maybe it'll not fall if I keep away. I'd like to come back and die here—just here."

She sat down on the ground and buried her head in her hands, rocking herself to and fro. Meg touched her shoulder.

"You'd better let me call Aunt Jean," she said.

The woman lifted her white face.

"I wish sometimes you'd think of me and say poor Marguerite—will you?" she asked.

"Every night when I say my prayers," said Meg.

The woman shuddered, and rose slowly from the ground.

"Good-bye, now," she said. "I'd like to kiss you; it couldn't do you any hurt."

"O kiss me, please," sobbed Meg; "I'm so sorry for you!"

"Don't be sorry; don't mind!"

She stooped, pressed the child to her in a passionate embrace, then hurried away, looking back once as she went down the road. On she walked, round the curve, past the cottage, the woodlands, and close to the gates of Tanglewood.

Elizabeth, who had this morning returned, came out of the grounds and took the road toward the cottage. The woman looked hard after her, half paused, and then hastened on.

"Who is that lady?" she asked a man who had stopped his cart to light a pipe.

"That's Mrs. Vaughan," said he.

"Who?"

"Mrs. Darrell Vaughan; old Miss Crauford's niece.

The woman groaned aloud, and hurried on. The man puffed meditatively at his pipe and glanced after her.

"Wrong in the head; that's what ails her," he said to himself: chirruped to his horse, and went his way also.

Elizabeth and Aunt Jean found Meg still seated near the gate; she was weeping softly, and saying,—

"Poor Marguerite, poor Marguerite."

A few days after, Mr. Carstoe came to Tanglewood late one evening with a telegram he had just received from Launce Cromlin:—

"*Bring Mrs. Vaughan to town. Must be here to-morrow. Darrell needs her.*"

CHAPTER XII.

NINA'S GHOST.

It was twilight. Nathalie La Tour stood at the window and watched Darrell Vaughan drive away from her house. He was obliged to go to Albany—would return the next day. Early in the following week Nathalie was to sail for Europe—he would join her there.

It was a warm evening, and the window was open. Nathalie still stood there after the carriage disappeared. A woman who had been walking up and down the pavement during the whole time of Vaughan's visit stopped suddenly under the casement—put up her veil, and looked full at Nathalie.

Nathalie saw her and shrank back in a terror that had no name. In spite of the difference in years it was her mother's face—the same deadly pallor, the same hard, reckless mouth, the same sombre fire in the great eyes.

"Open the door," said the woman; "open

the door, Madame La Tour; I want to speak with you, and I will!"

Nathalie could no more refuse than if her mother's ghost had halted there demanding admittance. She dragged herself across the hall, opened the outer door—the woman was on the steps. She entered quickly, closed the door behind her, and motioned Nathalie back into the parlour.

They stood there face to face—the woman wrapped in her black garments, Nathalie dressed in white, flowers in her hair, pearls on her neck and arms. She could not speak—the eyes that looked into hers seemed turning her to stone.

"Young and handsome," said the woman slowly, "covered with jewels and flowers; but you're going the same road! Look at me! I'm the ghost of what such women as you become—look at me!

"Who are you? what do you want?" moaned Nathalie, struggling against the conviction which smote at her heart.

"I want to see Darrell Vaughan's mistress—his last love: I'm looking at her now."

"It is false!" exclaimed Nathalie, in sudden anger.

"Hush!" said the woman. "I know all

about you; I know how you have paltered with your soul! But you're going to Europe to meet him; you have yielded at last."

Nathalie sank into a chair, putting up her hands, trying to close her eyes; she could only stare in a fascinated horror at the face before her.

"Will you tell me your name?" she asked, in a frightened voice.

"I told you I was a ghost—ghosts don't have names," returned the woman.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" moaned Nathalie.

"O Lord, you're French, exclaimed the other. "What can one expect of you! French; that's what my mother was who sent me off—sold me—got rid of me."

"Who was she—what was her name?" demanded Nathalie.

"O, let her alone," cried the woman, impatiently. "I don't remember her."

"You must tell me. Was it Nina?"

The woman nodded.

"Nina de Favolles," she said. "How did you know?"

"She was my mother too! Marguerite—Marguerite — I am your sister!" shrieked Nathalie.

She fell on her knees, shivering and sobbing.

The woman showed no emotion — not even surprise.

"Two days ago," said she, "I saw another sister of mine; I'm rich in relations all of a sudden."

"Do you mean Elizabeth?" groaned Nathalie.

"Yes, Elizabeth. Stop crying, get up; I hate such a noise."

Nathalie managed to rise and get to a sofa near.

"You saw Elizabeth?" she asked.

"Didn't I say so? My sister—Crauford's daughter—Darrell Vaughan's wife," returned the other.

Nathalie shrieked again.

"What did you say—what?"

"Darrell Vaughan's wife! What do you make a racket about that for?"

"Who said so?—who told you?"

"Lord!" exclaimed her sister, impatiently, paying no attention to Nathalie's face and voice of horror, "what a row you do make about everything—you're so French."

"Elizabeth Vaughan's wife!" repeated Nathalie in a strangled tone.

"Anybody would suppose you had made a discovery," retorted the other.

"I never knew—never—*O mon Dieu! O mon*

Dieu! It can't be—I don't believe it. Who said so?"

"Here's a case!" said the woman with a little laugh. "Never knew?"

"No, no! I tell you it can't be."

"Darrell Vaughan's wife, I say," repeated she. "They told me out there where she lives; no mistake whatever — Crauford's daughter, Darrell's wife."

"*O mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" groaned Nathalie again.

She fell back half fainting; hysterics followed; but her companion stood looking on with a certain cold wonder in her face, not offering the least assistance.

"You needn't cry now," said she at length, as Nathalie's sobs began to lessen; "it's rather late for that."

"I tell you I never knew!" moaned Nathalie. "Years ago she was my friend, and I loved her so—O Elizabeth!"

"O Nina de Favolle's daughter—Nina's daughter!" exclaimed the woman with another low, dreadful laugh.

"Don't—stop!" cried Nathalie. "Bring me some water! I'm choking—I shall die."

"Not a bit of it—dying's not so easy," was the answer. "I'll find you some water

though, for I want you to get your senses back. O, here's some wine on the table; drink this."

Vaughan had asked for wine and it had been brought. The glass held to her lips was the one from which he had drunk. Nathalie pushed it away, a sudden wrath springing up under her terror and confusion at the thought of him.

"Never waste good drink," said Marguerite, as the wine splashed over the floor. "I can't touch it myself—ten drops bring on the spasms: they're not like hysterics, I can tell you."

"Water—give me some water!" cried Nathalie.

She drank a little, had a recurrence of the hysterical sobs and suffocation, Margaret standing by as unmoved as before.

"Sister Elizabeth," said she at last, "Darrell Vaughan's wife! I do think that completes the thing—and you didn't know!"

Those words brought a hotter flash of anger into Nathalie's heart and restored her strength.

"No; he deceived me, lied to me. O, the base wretch!"

"Why of course he did," came the contemptuous reply; "what else would he do?"

"O Marguerite, Marguerite!"

"Don't you call me that—I'm Milady; he gave me the name."

"O, she must be crazy, she must be!" moaned Nathalie, unconsciously thinking aloud.

"No," said Milady, perfectly unmoved. "Somehow even my devils seem to let me alone. I came to see what you were like and you're my sister. Now I've my work to do; you can help if you want to."

"Help in what? O, I never hated anybody before! I want my revenge, my revenge!" gasped Nathalie through her set teeth.

"Do you? O yes—you love him! I neither love nor hate—I'm a ghost. I have my work to do and I must do it."

"O, I can't believe, I can't! Elizabeth his wife—O my presentiment that she laughed at. No, I don't believe it!"

"Well," said Milady indifferently, "I don't see that it matters to me whether you believe it or not. I suppose I may as well go. I don't know why I wanted to show you where your road ends by the sight of such as me; but I did. It won't do any good—you'll keep on."

She made a movement to leave the room—Nathalie caught her dress.

"Don't go—I'll not let you go!" she cried.

"I promised our mother—she was sorry; when she came to die she told me—"

"O, I don't mind about her," interrupted Milady. "Hell must be a largish place—Nina and I shan't interfere."

"She repented—she was sorry, I tell you; don't say such awful things!" returned Nathalie.

The expression of dull surprise came back to Milady's face.

"Why you 're afraid of it," said she. "Are you hoping to get out of the business by a death-bed repentance too?"

"I 'm not a bad woman!" exclaimed Nathalie, stamping her foot. "I never had a lover; O, I was going away with him—I own that."

Milady broke in with another laugh.

"You 'll go yet," said she. "I 'll wager what you like he 'll make you believe black 's white; you 'll go."

"I 'd have given up everything for him!" cried Nathalie. "But he has deceived me: he knew how I loved Elizabeth!"

"I suppose his setting me on the road to hell doesn't count," said Milady calmly.

"You didn't say—you didn't tell me—he—"

"It 's such an old story now! I was the

girl he fooled and ruined; I'm the woman he shut up in prison; and I've just been to see my child—mine and his."

"O, I shall go crazy, I shall!"

But Milady checked the hysterical outburst at once.

"If you keep that up I'm off," she said, "and you'll not see me again. I can't bear a noise; it hurts me here," and she laid her hand on her heart.

"I won't, I won't!" whimpered Nathalie, making, in this terrible crisis, the strongest effort at self-control that she had ever done in her whole life. "I hate him; O, how I do hate him!" she exclaimed, rushing from grief and horror into a passion which seemed childish and weak beside Milady's stern composure. "What did you mean about work and my helping? He shut you up in prison. O, he shall suffer—"

"Stuff!" interrupted Milady. "What could I do or you either against this rich, respectable gentleman? If we had nothing better than that to go upon you might whistle for your revenge, as you call it." Then she stopped to laugh—that dull, cold laugh, which still had something so savage in it that Nathalie trembled. "*You* wanting revenge! It sounds so droll!

You 're only a miserable, weak little butterfly, if you *are* Nina's daughter and Milady's sister."

Neither grief, nor anger, nor horror, though Nathalie was shaken to the very soul as nothing but her mother's death had ever moved her, could prevent her feeling the sting to her vanity which those words gave.

"You know nothing about me," she said proudly; "I am a very famous woman. I have written books—"

"O yes," interrupted Milady, "I know. When I first saw you, the night before last, with Darrell Vaughan, I asked about you. So you had to show your relationship to Nina and me by some sort of wickedness, though you 're too childish to half understand."

"I don't know what you mean! Don't talk to me like that, Marguerite."

"Don't you call me Marguerite again," said her sister, with a look in her eyes which made Nathalie's blood run cold. "Mean? Nina ruined all the men she could, and I once kept a gambling-house! But bad as we were, I don't suppose we did the harm you have by your wicked books; and never knew they were wicked—you ridiculous moth!"

"O, that 's what Monsieur La Tour said, and

Elizabeth," shuddered Nathalie. "I don't believe it! I don't believe it!"

"Well, well," returned Milady wearily. "It's of no consequence—a little wickedness more or less in the world; and probably nobody ever read your trash after all."

Nathalie would have expostulated further, but Milady held up her hand. She had seated herself, and was gazing straight before her, thinking deeply. She looked so like a representation of some merciless, passionless Fate, that Nathalie was more afraid of her than ever, and shrank into a corner of the sofa. Her eye was caught by a photograph of Vaughan that lay on the table. First she sobbed and moaned a little over her broken heart, then she snatched up the picture and tore it into fragments, with a passion which for an instant gave her childish face a painful resemblance to her mother's, and the stern, fixed countenance of Milady, who paid no attention to her outburst.

"Don't sit there like that—don't look so; you frighten me!" cried Nathalie. "What are you thinking about?"

"Do you know Launce Cromlin, his cousin?" asked Milady.

"Yes—no," returned Nathalie, colouring. She had met Launce once at a private exhibi-

tion of pictures in the Academy, and he had declined an introduction to her. "He 's a brute," she added. "He was very rude to me."

"Wasn't anxious to know the famous book-writer and Darrell's friend," sneered Milady. "Well, it is he who must help in the work too." Then her voice changed. "A good man—a good man! And the other, Carstoe; why seeing them almost made me think there might be a heaven, and a God in it; I can believe in the other place easily enough. They took me out of prison. Launce Cromlin shall have his rights; yes, he shall. When is that other man coming back?"

"To-morrow night." She began to cry again, but very quietly; Milady's eyes kept her from giving way further. "O, I was to have sailed on Saturday—he was to follow; and to think of you and Elizabeth! It 's too dreadful, too dreadful!"

"It is rather a mixing up of family affairs," said Milady. "You needn't snivel though. From your own account you 've escaped."

"I 've told you the truth—indeed I have," pleaded Nathalie humbly.

"I don't doubt it. You 've no blood in your veins. Maybe you 'd be a better woman if you were worse."

"O how hard you are!" moaned Nathalie.

"Hard?" repeated Milady. "I've drunk gall and fed on stones for a good many years now, my pretty authoress! O well, when one has been—loved by a man, and had a mother who repented—"

"She did repent," broke in Nathalie. "O let me tell you—I promised her to if I ever found you. She said she'd haunt me unless I did."

"She won't come while I'm here," replied Milady grimly.

"You were with rich people. She was poor just then—"

"You don't tell it right," said Milady, as Nathalie paused. "Nina sent me to a foundling hospital. Mrs. Rivers had a baby born dead. She'd lost so many they knew she would die if she was disappointed then. Mr. Rivers went to the hospital and got me—Nina's cast-off child. Till I was seventeen I never knew I was not their own—never knew."

"Yes, yes," Nathalie said eagerly. "Mamma kept track of you—she was so content to know you were happy, rich. Then, after all those years, she heard Mr. Rivers was dead, and you had quarrelled with his wife and were gone: O, she never had a moment's peace after that."

"They had a daughter born to them less than two years after they took me," said Milady. "But he loved me—yes, he did; loved me better than all his silly wife's children, for she had three. How she hated me! I wondered why she was so different from other mothers, but I had him—I didn't care."

"She knew you weren't her child?"

"Yes; she found it out—hunted up every clue—got letters that fool Nina wrote Mr. Rivers about me. She held her peace, waiting for him to die; she knew he couldn't live many years. She had the whole story—Nina, Crauford's name. So I was seventeen and he died. He never knew how she hated me; she was always artful as the devil, and I didn't complain."

"*Ah mon Dieu!*" sighed Nathalie.

"Then I had my part in his will—his daughter Marguerite. She flew at me before he was in his grave; told me who I was—that I should not have a penny; told the whole story out to anybody that would listen. That's what came to me when I was seventeen."

Nathalie could only shiver and weep, motioning her to go on.

"O the rest doesn't need words," said Milady. "Darrell Vaughan was their friend:

I loved him! He took me when madame turned me out to starve. Every door was shut in my face—not a soul to help! He took me —he took me—I loved him."

There was something appalling in the coldness and unconcern of her speech; it frightened Nathalie past the relief of tears.

"A year of heaven; how a body sticks to that word!" laughed Milady. "Another year of being let gradually down into hell. He struck me once; that was just before the baby was born—we were in New Orleans. The night she was born he left me—left me without money even, for he'd been gambling, and had sold the jewels he had given me. He went away with another woman—that's all. Can you understand, you butterfly?"

"*O mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"

"Deafer than a stone, my dear, even if he's anywhere about—deafer than a stone!" said Milady.

"Ah, don't, don't! And where did you go? What did you do?"

"She's interested!" sneered Milady. "It's like a novel to her; she'd put it in a book if only she had the power! You must drink fire and live among devils before your dainty pen can write my history, pretty dear."

"You frighten me so! Let me call Susanne! Don't you want to lie down?" sobbed Nathalie.

"No, my poppet," replied Milady, with another smile of woeful derision. "I must be up and about my work."

"What are you going to do?"

"Only to tell," said Milady, drawing a paper from her bosom, and replacing it before Nathalie could move. "I want Launce Cromlin; I 've found where he lives."

"Don't go; let me send for him; you're not fit."

Milady had risen, but a spasm seized her. She sank back on the sofa, her face livid, her eyes closed.

Nathalie thought she was dead, and shrieked till she brought in Susanne. The old woman caught sight of the figure lying on the couch—the room was dim with shadows, but a last ray of light flashed through the window and fell upon the death-like countenance. Susanne shrieked louder than Nathalie had done, and dropped upon her knees.

"Madame's ghost! Madame's ghost!"

Nathalie started up in wilder alarm, glanced about, half expecting to see some phantom shape arise. Then she saw that Susanne's

eyes were fixed on the prostrate form, and understood what had caused the exclamation.

"It 's Marguerite. I 've found her," she cried.

Susanne knew the history; had heard of Nathalie's promise, and understood the whole.

"Is she dead?" the old woman asked, in an awe-stricken tone, as she struggled up from her knees.

At the same instant Milady roused herself—the cramped hands relaxed, the features lost their convulsive rigidity.

"Who ever dies?" said she, answering Susanne in French. "Get me some water—some opium too! What a pair of fools you are, always expecting Nina's ghost; you must wait till I 'm gone to see that! Nina de Favolles—Nina!" She began to laugh, to mutter more broken words. She seemed to realize that her mind was wandering. "Get the opium, you idiots!" she exclaimed.

The voice was so like the voice of her mother, the face tortured by pain so like Nina's face as they had seen it time and again in her paroxysms, that even Susanne was nearly out of her senses with fright, and Nathalie cowered down into her chair and hid her eyes, utterly helpless. But Susanne recollected there was

opium in the house—Darrell Vaughan had sent her for it one night with a physician's prescription that he always carried about him. Susanne had put the bottle away in case he should some time ask for it again. She ran upstairs to fetch it—the necessity for action made her helpful once more.

She came back with the drug, and began to measure a spoonful into a tumbler in which she had put some water, but Milady snatched the flacon as Susanne stood by the sofa, and drained nearly the whole contents.

"*Sacré nom d'un chien!*" howled Susanne. "She 's poisoned herself;" and started for the door with a half-defined intention of seeking doctors and stomach-pumps. Nathalie dared not even look up; she only slipped out of her chair at Susanne's exclamation, and lay huddled on the floor. But a stern command from Milady stopped the old woman in her flight. It was Nina's voice again—just the words Nina would have employed.

"Stay where you are, *fille d'un serpent!*" ordered Milady.

"Won't it hurt you?" asked Susanne, creeping timidly back—she who had never feared anybody till now.

"Hurt me? I shall need another such dose

before morning," said Milady. "Where 's that moth—that Nathalie?"

"Here I am—here," replied Nathalie, sitting up on the floor, fairly stunned by her varying emotions.

"I want Launce Cromlin—I can't go out—send for him," said Milady.

"Susanne will go. Where does he live?"

Milady gave the name of his hotel.

"Tell him Milady wants him," said she; "and be quick about it, old woman, for the opium may make me sleep. *Entends-tu, vieille sorcière? Ne me regardes pas avec tes yeux hébétés—ça m'ennuie.*"

"She speaks French as well as we," muttered Susanne.

"Of course I do," returned Milady, still speaking in that language. "I was brought up to be a *grande dame*—more than you can say for Nina or your Nathalie either."

Then she reiterated her commands, and Susanne hastened away.

Milady lay back on the sofa and spoke no more. Nathalie dared not stir or address her. The room was quite dark, but she was near enough the sofa to catch the glare of Milady's eyes as she stared into the gloom. Nathalie recollected that she was absolutely alone in the

house with the woman. She had intended to dine out, and the servants had taken a holiday. She pressed her hand hard against her mouth to repress a scream; she was afraid to anger Milady by a sound.

The room grew darker—the muslin window-curtains rustled in the breeze—the sound was like phantom footsteps in Nathalie's ears. If her mother's ghost should appear! She could see that face always on the sofa—such a terrible likeness to Nina's! She could not bear it, she should go mad!

"Marguerite!" she whispened. "Marguerite!"

There was no response, no sign that her call had been heard; she could see the great eyes staring always. If she only dared light the gas; but her fear of her companion, a horrible sensation that something supernatural was in the room with them, coming closer, closer, deprived her of all power to move. She heard the clock strike, then a silence and waiting that seemed endless, and still Susanne did not come. The clock beat the half-hour, and the slow stroke was like a heavy weight falling on her brain. The moon came up over the opposite houses, cast a long ray through the curtains, and lighted up the sofa and the

motionless figure thereon, leaving the rest of the room in deeper darkness.

The window draperies rustled more like ghostly footsteps than before; the sigh of the low wind was like a ghostly voice whispering some terrible menace in an unknown tongue. If she could get away—only out on the steps, and sit there till Susanne appeared. But she could not move. She must cry out—no matter what Marguerite might do, her anger could not be so terrible as this stillness. She tried to shriek—her voice was gone; even in her own ears there sounded only a hoarse murmur which seemed no effort of hers.

And now memory after memory came up, stunned as she was. Her mother's death-bed—her husband's warnings. O, was she dying—was this hell already—the hell in whose existence she had hitherto been certain she had no belief? Terrible, denunciatory sermons her mother had made her read drifted through her mind—the awful Papistical warnings to heretics and reprobates—and she was both. Elizabeth's face, like that of an accusing angel, rose. Her own mad theories, the absurd creeds which she had believed in and helped to promulgate, haunted her. Passages from her own books, that she had admired as brave and fear-

less to fling in the face of the world's prejudices, rang in her ears like a knell of doom.

She was dying, dying, and the warning her husband had uttered was being fulfilled!

"Darrell Vaughan! Darrell Vaughan!"

It was Milady's voice that broke the stillness. She had not moved; the lids had dropped partially over the dull glare of her eyes; the powerful narcotic had begun its effects.

"Marguerite! Marguerite!" called Nathalie, but it was only a strangled whisper still—no answer came.

Was Marguerite dead—had she died with that name on her lips? O, would Susanne never come back? If she could only shriek for help; she heard some one passing along the street, singing as he went. With one last mighty effort she got upon her feet, and staggered toward the door, but the momentary strength gave way, and she fell senseless.

Half-an-hour later, old Susanne, entering the drawing-room, followed by Launce Cromlin, stumbled over Nathalie's prostrate form.

They lighted the gas, and looked about. Milady lay on the sofa in a deep lethargic slumber, from which no efforts could rouse her, and when Nathalie was brought back to consciousness, she was only capable of hysterical

bursts of anguish, fright, and rage, by which Launce gathered enough to know that retribution was guiding two merciless women on Darrell Vaughan's track, and that he must act quickly if he would save the man from utter ruin and disgrace.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MILL OF THE GODS.

THE night has passed—another day gone—the twilight has come again.

Darrell Vaughan rings at the door of Nathalie's house—is admitted, and hastens into the drawing-room. He has sent word of his arrival—he has come to dine. Nathalie is waiting for him, beautifully dressed; her neck and arms bare; the plume of jewels that he gave her shining among her yellow curls.

"My beautiful—my star!" he cries, and hurries forward, bending on one knee to kiss her white hands, knowing how she likes effective scenes and exaggerated gallantry. "Why, you are superb; one would think you were dressed for a royal ball!" he adds laughingly.

"Hasn't the king come again?" returns she with easy playfulness, leaving her hands in his clasp.

"And you are glad to see me—you missed me?"

"I never missed you so much!" she replies. "I never was so glad to see you—never!"

He wants to take her in his arms—to kiss the lips for whose sweetness his passionate soul is hungry. But Nathalie has never permitted that, so her repulse neither surprises nor angers him, only increases the wild tumult in his heart. He pours forth anew the story of his love, and Nathalie listens. She makes him vow and swear; she is teazing and capricious, tender and coquettish all at once; and Vaughan declares that even if he had to relinquish his whole future it would be well lost for her sake. He has forgotten the weary numbness which has oppressed him for days—making pleasure an impossibility, business a maze. Wine and opium have failed in their effects, but he has had recourse to hasheesh, and is full of life and nervous vitality to his very finger-tips.

Desperate, shaken as Nathalie is, sick and frightened by remorse, the details she has this day heard of Marguerite's life—shuddering at the very sight of this man—she finds a certain pleasure in acting the scene. She is waiting for Launce Cromlin—she knows he will come. Launce has been too wise to oppose the implacable women—careful not to waken their suspicions lest they should expose Vaughan

before he can bring Elizabeth—he has no hope save in her.

But Launce does not appear. The dinner-hour has arrived—Vaughan will wonder; besides, her anger rushes up again, and she longs to begin the work.

"Do you like surprises?" she asks.

"Any you could give me would be pleasant," he replies.

She laughs; he sees her eyes glitter oddly.

"You are not well, I do believe," he says. "You are nervous; not like yourself somehow."

"Quite myself—quite!" and her laugh fairly has a ring like Milady's; but Darrell Vaughan does not think of that. "About my surprise!" she continues.

"You shall tell me at dinner. I have eaten nothing all day."

He might have named a longer time than that, for his appetite of late has entirely deserted him. He has lived almost wholly on stimulants for a week past, but to-night the thought of food does not bring back the sickness and abhorrence he has been suffering from, and he wants champagne too.

She laughs and jests, and he goes on his knees again beside her. Then Nathalie, laying her hand on his shoulder, says,—

"You shall have the surprise first," lifts her voice, and calls, "Come in."

The door of the apartment at the back of the drawing-room opens—a woman dressed in black moves swift and noiseless as a ghost close to them, and Vaughan starts to his feet with an inarticulate cry.

"This is my sister—this is Milady!" he hears Nathalie exclaim, and then Milady's answer,—

"A family party, Darrell Vaughan."

And both women laugh.

He makes one grasp at his reeling faculties, and says,—

"Where did you pick up that mad woman, Nathalie? What crazy story has she been telling you?"

Nathalie's wretched nerves are so near giving way after the force she has put upon herself to bring the scene to a climax, that she can only sink back in her chair and fight against hysterical screams; his very composure adds to her excitement.

As he glances from one to the other, Vaughan's thought is not that which would come to most men at a crisis like this. He does not think of the possibility of Milady's having some actual proof which may ruin him

before the world—does not think of danger or disgrace. He only realizes that after all his waiting, his patience, Milady has lost him this bewitching creature, for whom he has been ready to sacrifice so much. One of his cold rages seizes him; his impulse is to spring forward and fell the woman to the floor.

"Yes, I see it in your eyes," says Milady quietly. "I'm a ghost, Darrell Vaughan; you can't murder me again."

He turns his back impatiently upon her.

"Nathalie!" he cries, "she is a mad woman—she has been in an asylum in California; you can't heed any story she may tell. Send for somebody to take her away."

"Back to prison, perhaps," says Milady. "No, no; you can't play the same game twice; there are no diamonds to steal in my name now."

"Nathalie, Nathalie, listen to me!" he exclaims. He can only think of her—of his love, of his wild passion, which has never had its first fever slaked.

"I don't want to look at you, to hear your voice!" sobs Nathalie, unable to be either heroic or dramatic. "I hate you—I hate you! The whole world shall know—liar—forger—thief!"

The coarse instincts inherited from Nina de Favolles break out in Nathalie as they have never done in her whole life. She finds pleasure in screaming these denunciations in his ear. Compared to her, Milady's frozen impassibility is dignified and feminine.

But Vaughan does not half take in the sense of the added imprecations which Nathalie pours out in Nina's voice and with Nina's very gestures. She looks diabolically beautiful in her fury; he can only think of that—that and his desire to murder Milady and stifle Nathalie in his arms with hot kisses.

He makes a step toward her. Nathalie shrinks back, crying,—

"I'll kill you if you touch me; I'll call the police."

"Nathalie!" he groans. "I love you—I love you! I never loved any other woman—I care for nothing else in the world. Don't mind her—I tell you she's mad; I'll not give you up, I'll not!"

Furious as she is,—in spite of her horror, of the newly-awakened remorse for the errors of her life which have this day beset her,—Nathalie is touched by the plea. He looks so handsome too—like a god she thinks! No man can talk like him, no man's love be worth the

having—and he is lost to her; a gulf, black as the horrors of the eternity in which she has suddenly begun to believe, looms between them. She loves him—she loves him; no, she hates him; but the excitement has gone from her life—the drama is played out; she is afraid of him—herself; the very fame of which she has been so absurdly vain has grown loathsome and abhorrent.

So Nathalie can find nothing better to do than go into strong hysterics, struggling, fighting, striking at Vaughan as he tries to get to her with some mad intention of carrying her off before she can get sense to resist, and Milady's icy voice rises again, making itself audible alike to Nathalie in her spasm, and Vaughan in his insane whirl of resolve.

"What a family party!" she repeats. "Be quiet, both of you; I've had enough of this."

That cold, passionless voice!—it has a power which stills them both, even at this instant! She looks so like a ghost, the voice is so dead! Had she indeed come back from the grave they could not regard her with deeper horror.

Before either of the three can stir or speak again, the door opens. A carriage has driven to the house unheard by them; now the draw-

ing-room door opens and Elizabeth enters, followed by Mr. Carstoe and Launce Cromlin.

"I am not too late—O, I thank God for it!" are the words that fall from Elizabeth's lips.

She walks directly up to Milady, who stands dumbly staring. Nathalie has retreated to a sofa. Darrell Vaughan's eyes wander from Carstoe to Launce with a look of murderous hate, then remain fixed by a kind of fascination upon the face of the woman who was once his wife.

"Marguerite," says Elizabeth softly, "do you know who I am?"

"Yes, I know," replies Milady, in her defiant voice. "Crauford's daughter! There's Nina's girl yonder! Here's Milady, with the blood of both in her veins."

"Marguerite—my sister!"

Elizabeth's tone is low, but it does not falter; it strikes with unearthly sweetness on the ear of every listener there, and her pale face is lighted with a look of tenderness and patience which renders its loveliness more than mortal.

"Marguerite—sister!"

Milady's defiant head droops; she sways back and forth, drops on her knees, and stares up in Elizabeth's face as a lost soul in purgatory might stare at an angel suddenly descended

into the midst of the darkness with words of heavenly comfort.

"Don't!" she gasps, in an awful whisper. "Pretty soon you will make me believe in God Almighty."

None of the others utter a sound—even Nathalie is dumb. As for Darrell Vaughan, the numbness in his brain—the ringing in his ears—has returned. He can only support himself against the table and wonder vaguely what is to come next.

"You will believe," Elizabeth answers; "it is for that He has brought us to this hour."

Milady gazes from one to another, pointing at Elizabeth with her wasted hand. Her face has lost its icy coldness: it is troubled, vaguely. She looks as she used in the prison when wondering if she were indeed mad.

"Crauford's daughter!" she says in a difficult, broken tone.

"And your sister!" adds Elizabeth.

Milady struggles up from her knees and looks round the group—then her eyes go back to Elizabeth.

"Would you take me home?—would you not be ashamed—you that are grand and respectable—not like her, she's nothing to lose" (pointing to Nathalie),—"would you?"

"Yes."

Again Milady's eyes wander to the faces about her, with the same expression of troubled wonder—come back once more to Elizabeth with a wistful eagerness that makes her whole countenance look younger.

"I wouldn't go," she says abruptly. I'm not human, but I seem to have a touch of humanity about me—I wouldn't go."

She tries to shrink away; Elizabeth takes her hand and holds it fast.

"Marguerite," she says, "you have a paper that I want you to give me."

Milady wrenched her hand free, the dull fire kindles anew in her eyes, the look of dogged resolution hardens her features.

"I had forgotten everything," she mutters. Then she points to Darrell Vaughan, and adds, in a louder tone,—"Yes, a paper; he and all of you shall hear."

The strange numbness is growing stronger through Vaughan's whole frame; only something in his temples seems to beat and turn like the roll of a noisy wheel. He feels about for a chair and sits down.

"So this is a plot!" he exclaims, "and you 're all in it; much good may it do you."

"Marguerite," continues Elizabeth, regard-

less as the others that he has spoken, "give me the paper—we don't want to hear it."

Milady looks confused and troubled; her eyes wander toward Cromlin, and her face grows determined again.

"I must tell," she says. "I don't want vengeance! I'm a ghost, but I must tell."

"How much longer is this little scene with that mad woman to go on?" Vaughan breaks in. "Carstoe, you used not to be quite a fool; you must know this is nonsense! As for my precious cousin there, of course I understand his little game."

Neither of the men appears to hear. Vaughan clenches his hands over the arms of his chair to hold himself still. He cannot even venture to go on speaking; he feels his utterance become thick, and that remorseless wheel turns faster and faster in his brain.

"You're fond of calling people mad, Darrell Vaughan," cries Nathalie, with an hysterical laugh and sob. "You were going to shut your wife up! He was, Elizabeth! He told me his wife was a monomaniac and needed to be confined. O, I didn't know it was you—I didn't know it was you!"

"Hush, Nathalie!" returns Elizabeth.

The wretched creature cowers back into her

place and weeps silently. For the first time in her life a sense of shame oppresses her—she is positively afraid to meet Elizabeth's eyes.

"She 's only a silly little moth," says Milady; "she 's not even what they call wicked, you know."

"I know," replies Elizabeth.

"She believes me — she believes me!" shrieks Nathalie. "O, I can die contented now."

Vaughan laughs. Nathalie's sobs redouble, and she moans incoherent words of grief and passion.

"Be still!" orders Milady sternly, and the weak, half-made creature buries her head in the sofa pillows, and presses her handkerchief against her mouth, frightened into a fresh effort at self-control.

"Give me the paper, Marguerite," repeats Elizabeth, in the same low, gentle voice, which has such a ring of command in spite of its persuasiveness.

"No!" answers Milady. "It must go to the lawyers—I can't give it up—I must do my work; it has been set for me—I must do it."

"There is no need now, Marguerite."

"Yes, there is; you don't know! It is the will—the will Darrell Vaughan thought he had

burned: it gives all the fortune to him" (pointing to Launce); "he must have his rights."

"You set of infernal liars!" exclaims Vaughan, starting out of his chair. "Pretty instruments you choose, Madame Elizabeth—a street-walker, a convict—to help you and Launce to my money. Launce, who is your—"

Cromlin strides forward—Mr. Carstoe pushes him back, and himself stands over Vaughan.

"One word more and I'll call in the officers myself," he says. "That angel yonder is trying to save you—one word, and I will take your punishment into my own hands. I tell you it is of no use to struggle—all is exposed."

The old man positively looked grand in his stern indignation. Vaughan falls back in his chair—not from fear—he can stand no longer; the beat beat of that wheel leaves him half deaf to Carstoe's words.

"I'm just what he says," pursues Milady, looking at Elizabeth; "he made me so. I've been a convict—he shut me up—he stole the jewels—he came to my room—drugged me—"

"We know, Marguerite," breaks in Launce.

"But you must have your rights," she goes on in the same passionless tone. "The fortune is yours—"

"I have had moral proof of that for years,"

Launce interrupts again; "it does not matter."

Elizabeth has not once glanced toward her former husband. Now she turns—it is with a great effort, as one can see—and walks toward him. Even the horror and dread leave her face as she looks into his, altered greatly in these weeks, and comprehends as none of the others do the possible effects of this scene upon his broken frame. There is nothing save pity in her eyes now. He tries to meet her glance, but when he sees that look his eyes sink.

"Mr. Vaughan," she says, "Marguerite is right. You must make over to your cousin the fortune left by your uncle; it is his."

"I don't want it; let him keep the whole," cries Launce.

Elizabeth silences him with a gesture.

"Will you do this, Mr. Vaughan?" she asks.

He gathered up the remnants of his failing strength in a mad passion, that for a moment overcomes the weakness, the intolerable physical agony.

"No!" he fairly shouts. "O, you devil; if I had only murdered you long ago!"

Nathalie shrieks aloud at his face and voice, but the others are unmoved.

"Madame," says Mr. Carstoe, addressing Elizabeth, "you must allow Marguerite to tell her story; nothing else will convince that wretched man of his madness in hesitating.

"Tell it then, Marguerite," rejoins Elizabeth wearily, and she moves away from Vaughan's side.

Even in the excitement of this moment, Mr. Carstoe and Launce are both conscious of thinking it is like seeing a good angel turn from a sinner's presence, warned that intercession is no longer possible.

"I knew he forged Launce Cromlin's name," says Milady slowly. "It was before he took me to New Orleans. He was tired of me; he struck me once, but I couldn't tell of him. I have the papers where he used to practise writing the name. Long afterwards, in California, Jem Davis, the man that helped, confessed when he was dying; it 's all written down."

She speaks in a chill, mechanical fashion, without the slightest trace of emotion.

Vaughan has to make a great effort to listen and understand. The numbness increases—the wheel turns faster in his brain.

"You fools!" he calls hoarsely. "That thing's chatter is no evidence; you can't make a witness of her."

"But the written documents in her possession, with signatures which can be sworn to, are evidence—you know that," replies Mr. Carstoe.

"She has none!" cries Vaughan.

"Davis's confession is in my hands," returns the lawyer. "She gave it to your cousin last night. He tried to get the will, tried in every way to save you, but she would not consent. You intercepted the cheque your uncle sent to Cromlin; you altered it to fifteen thousand dollars—forged Cromlin's name. Davis presented it at the bank; the teller was your accomplice. Davis had three thousand dollars for his share; he was in difficulty, and wanted to get off to Mexico. He swore to all this on his death-bed. You see we know everything."

"You are an old villain; you are their tool!" thunders Vaughan.

"As a last resource," pursues Mr. Carstoe, "that much-injured lady, who was once your wife, has come to plead for you and with you. For God's sake, don't render her interposition useless—don't force the rest of us to act."

"I don't want any preaching!" cries Vaughan, shaking his fist aimlessly in the air. "I'll fight it out! I'll fight it out! It is a

plot—a trick; the woman is hired by my wife and my wife's lover."

But even Launce cannot be roused beyond pity now.

"Marguerite," says Mr. Carstoe, "let me look at the signatures to that will."

She hesitates.

"You can keep it in your hands; I only want to assure this man of the folly of more words."

Milady draws the paper from her bosom—three fragments rather.

"He tore it!" she explains.

Mr. Carstoe examines the pieces; fits them together; Milady not trying to prevent his taking them.

"I can swear to the signatures," he says. "I can bring twenty men in Moysterville to swear to that of Mr. Vaughan. The witnesses, Mrs. Simpson and Anthony Turner, will swear to their own. Mrs. Simpson always assured me that she signed three documents; one was the codicil made out to go with the other will."

"The other will!" repeats Vaughan with a laugh. "You 're only a fool after all, Carstoe; how many could there have been? I don't suppose you, at least, will attempt to deny that the will we found in my uncle's desk, giving me the fortune, was a genuine one?"

The sudden loophole which has suggested itself clears Vaughan's brain enough for him to speak collectedly. It is a tremendous effort, and in spite of himself his head sinks back against his chair as he ends.

"It was a genuine document," Mr. Carstoe replies; "it was a will made long before his death; the codicil, I supposed, was added when he learned that Cromlin was innocent in the forgery matter."

"There," mutters Vaughan, "you have upset the plot yourself."

"The codicil was drawn up," continues Mr. Carstoe, "when Mr. Vaughan's lawyer discovered that Launce Cromlin could not have forged the cheque, because proof had come that, for six weeks before its date and six weeks after, he was unable to use his hand. He had had a compound fracture of the right arm; that came out in a chance conversation with the physician who attended him: you all know that as well as I. Now I had supposed that Mr. Vaughan then made a will dividing the fortune equally between his two nephews; but I found the codicil attached to the will drawn up long before, when he first believed Cromlin guilty—the will by which you, Darrell Vaughan, inherited the property."

Vaughan is too dizzy to speak, but his face lights with triumph. His head is so confused that everything still seems secure to him.

"I can tell," says Milady; "do you want me to?"

"Yes—everything," returns Mr. Carstoe.

"When Jem Davis made his confession," she begins again in the same slow, methodical fashion, "I took the paper he had signed in the presence of a clergyman, and went to Moysterville. I was alive then, and I wanted my revenge,"—she looked at Elizabeth as she said this,—"but I'm a ghost now: I don't hate him; but I have to tell."

"Yes, Marguerite," Elizabeth whispers.

"I went to old Mr. Vaughan," pursues Milady. "He was ill, but he was in his library. I gave him Jem's confession; then I told him all about myself. He was very good to me—"

Her voice falters slightly, and she breaks off for an instant, then continues as quietly as ever,—

"It was a dreadful blow to know about Darrell; but he didn't forget to be good to me. When he could talk, he showed me a will he had made a few days before, giving the property equally to those two there, and

he read me the codicil about Elizabeth; it was written to go with that will."

Even Mr. Carstoe looks perplexed now, and watches her narrowly to see if there is the least sign of mental aberration, and Vaughan laughs again.

"The codicil was fastened to the will by three seals," says Milady. "Mr. Vaughan broke them off, then he destroyed the will—I put it in the fire for him myself."

The room has been still enough before; it grows strangely silent now—even Vaughan does not stir.

"He told me to come back to him the next day—he meant to help me—help *me!* So I went; he was in his library again, but very weak. He had had Mr. Smith there; he showed me the new will, leaving everything to Launce Cromlin—this will," and she holds it up.

"And therein he tells the reasons," adds Mr. Carstoe. "What more, Marguerite?"

"He put this will, giving the money to Cromlin, back in his cabinet," says Milady. "He saved the codicil because he said he had not decided how to alter it, but it must apply to Launce alone. He showed me the letter he had that morning written to Elizabeth—he called her my sister; that letter was for

Launce to give her. He said that he had put the first will of all—the one by which Darrell inherited—away where he could not find it. His head was bad, and he could not remember —he should hunt for it later; but it was no matter because the last one would hold good."

She has been standing all the while—she looks about now wearily—Elizabeth draws a chair forward and seats her in it.

Darrell is trying to speak, to collect his thoughts to find some hope of escape. But he can only lean back, faint under the dull thud in his brain which Milady's voice pierces like a cold wind.

"Then, just as he had begun to talk again about me," she goes on, "he fell on the floor in a fit. I ran to call help, and met Mrs. Simpson. Then I went away—I had no right to stay."

"I wonder if she has almost finished?" they hear Vaughan mutter—not in defiance or scorn. But no one comprehends that it is just bodily pain which wrings out the words—her voice hurts.

"The next day Darrell Vaughan came," says Milady. "I stayed in Moysterville—something kept me. I watched the house—I watched him. I learned how to get into it day or night by a

back door—down through the cellar, and up into a closet where they kept the wood for the library fire; the closet had a door into the library."

"O that woman!" mutters Vaughan. "I always wondered how she got there—why I thought it was her ghost at first!"

"The night Mr. Vaughan died, I went to my hiding-place. I'd seen Darrell at the papers before—I knew he would destroy the will now—I thought I could call some one in time. I saw Darrell at the cabinet; I stood behind him without his knowing I was there. He had found both wills, and the copy of Jem's confession—Mr. Vaughan had told me to keep the original myself for the present; he meant to confront me with Darrell—was expecting him every day."

She stopped to rest for an instant—nobody moved.

"Darrell fastened the codicil to the old will—I don't know why."

"Because I had read it—had told him so," says Mr. Carstoe.

"He tore the new will, got up, threw it on the fire. I was going to stop him; but there was a noise overhead—he ran out of the room. I picked the will off the coals—the fire was

almost out. I hid that and Jem's confession in the secret drawer of the cabinet—old Mr. Vaughan had opened it when he was hunting for the first will—he said nobody knew the secret or could discover it. Then I threw another paper on the fire."

"Why did you hide them?" asks Mr. Carstoe.

"Because I wanted to stay and see Darrell, and I was afraid he might suspect, and get the will away."

"Yes; go on."

"He came back—he saw me—he did choke me, and drag me about the room; but he noticed the ashes on the hearth, and thought the will was burned."

There is a sound from Vaughan, more like the growl of a wild animal than a moan, yet it is a sound of suffering. Everybody except Milady starts forward; he waves them off—struggles fiercely for strength, and sits upright.

"Go on, you devil!" he says.

"I told him it was I who had come to his uncle—I who had done the work; that I would defeat him yet. He beat me—he tried to bargain with me; finally, he told me to do my worst, and he opened the glass door that led on to the verandah, and pushed me out."

"There she was in my hands, and I didn't kill her!" mutters Vaughan's voice again.

"I was ill for several days—he had hurt me; and besides it was raining that night, and I caught cold. I knew the funeral was over, and the will read, and Darrell had the fortune. The first day I could get out I went to the pawnbroker's to get some money on a ring, for I had none left. I saw Darrell and Mr. Carstoe in the bank door. I meant to tell Mr. Carstoe; but I dared not then—I wanted to get the will first. Then towards sundown Darrell came to my room—I had gone to bed again. He talked softly—pretended he was willing to help me, and I acted as if I believed, for I wanted to fool him till I got the will. Then he gave me the hasheesh—he had taught me to crave it—and I was in great pain. Then I went off—off—O, I don't know where; and when I woke up the officers were in the room—and that's all."

She stops abruptly, and sits quite still.

Elizabeth looks at Mr. Carstoe; he comprehends that she wishes him to finish as quickly as possible what remains to do. He seats himself at the table near Vaughan, and writes rapidly for a few minutes—Vaughan watching him with his insane eyes.

"This is what you have to sign," says Mr.

Carstoe; "then for the sake of others—not for yours—this secret remains among us here." He reads aloud:—

"MR. CARSTOE,—A will of my uncle's, the late Edgar Vaughan, has been discovered which gives the whole of his fortune to my cousin, Launce Cromlin, not even excepting the sum named in the codicil. I am ready at once to restore to my cousin the whole property, including interest for the time that I have held it in my possession."

"I wish," begins Launce, but Mr. Carstoe checks him.

"I can compound with my conscience no further than this," says the lawyer firmly. "Darrell Vaughan, will you sign this paper, or will you have the whole matter made public from this night?"

Again that sound from his lips, half-moan, half-snarl, like a wild beast at bay. His glazed eyes wander to Elizabeth, on to Cromlin. Mr. Carstoe holds the pen toward him, he pushes it away. A look is exchanged between them, defiant on his part, stern and determined on the lawyer's. He snatches the pen and writes his name.

"Curse you!" he cries, starting up. "Curse you all. O if I—"

The words die in a fresh groan; he totters back, slips from the chair before Mr. Carstoe can catch him, and falls upon the floor, still and white, with his glazed, senseless eyes staring blindly upward.

Before Elizabeth and Launce can reach Mr. Carstoe's side, Milady springs forward, pushes him off, drops on her knees by the prostrate form, moaning,—

"I loved him; nobody else ever did; I loved him!"

She believes that the soul has gone out from that motionless shape. Feeling, womanly instincts, come back in this awful moment, and the wild love of her girlhood comes too. Rooted out as it has so long seemed—murdered, forgotten—back it comes now.

"I loved him—I always loved him! Nobody else ever did, nobody! O my Darrell, my Darrell!"

She sways forward till her head rests on his breast; one convulsive quiver shakes her limbs, then all is still.

The first thought in the minds of the horrified watchers is that the betrayer and the betrayed lie there dead together.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIVE YEARS.

MANY weeks passed before Marguerite was released, but there were kind friends about her to the last. She died holding Elizabeth's hand in hers, able to trust that He who had pardoned the Magdalene could forgive her.

"When you called me sister I believed in Him," she said to Elizabeth; and Elizabeth felt with tears of thankfulness that she could never again call her life utterly barren of fruit.

Of course Nathalie took to her bed at the first, and was as helpless as possible; but she grew rather ashamed of that, and though a good deal afraid of Elizabeth and Mr. Carstoe, and much in awe of Marguerite herself, she did make an effort; and the lessons of those days had an effect even upon her frivolous nature.

While Elizabeth was occupied with Milady, remaining most of the time in Nathalie's house,

Launce Cromlin assumed the care of Darrell Vaughan. He had been carried to his own home, senseless, mindless, unable to move. He would remain so, perhaps, to the end.

So Milady was buried, and the new duty of Elizabeth's life began.

She did not see Launce again. He sailed for Europe and the East on the day before her return to that dwelling whose threshold she had thought never to cross again.

All the business arrangements had been settled by Mr. Carstoe so quietly that the world had slight opportunity even to weave a romance in regard to the newly-discovered will. The vast fortune which Vaughan had accumulated during these years of course fell under Elizabeth's management. She could not dispose of the principal, but the whole income went toward charities; it seemed to her that she thus offered a little atonement for him.

Nathalie was going back to France—back to Monsieur La Tour. A spasm of repentance had seized her. She rushed into it in the same headlong fashion which had always characterized her proceedings.

"I'll buy up every book I have written and burn the whole," she said to Elizabeth, and she was encouraged to do so.

Perhaps it proved a shock to her vanity, crushed as she was, to find this "buying up" a less expensive matter than she expected. The editions of her works had been small, and the publishers did not place any exorbitant value upon the stereotyped plates in their possession.

As the autumn came on, there was a change in Darrell Vaughan. He was able to sit up—to be wheeled into the air; but he would never walk, and his mind was hopelessly wrecked. The physicians decided that the quiet of the country would be best for him, so during the golden October days Elizabeth took him away to Tanglewood.

"You used to talk a great deal about finding your real work," said Aunt Janet; "have you found it now?"

"It was too plainly shown for me to doubt," Elizabeth answered.

For many a day there was a cold wonder in Aunt Janet's eyes as she watched her niece, but she softened gradually under the influence of Elizabeth's example.

So the months passed—grew into years. I shall not tell you that Elizabeth was happy in her sacrifice—that she was even content. Often the struggle was almost as hard as in the old days, but peace came.

She had Mr. Carstoe's companionship, and Meg was like a little sunbeam to her. She had constant occupation too, for Vaughan could not bear her out of his sight. During the later time occasional gleams of memory came back, but none that were dark or unpleasant. The doctors thought it probable that he would live to old age; and it was the feeling that she had found the work which might last her whole life that helped Elizabeth to grow patient and settled—to feel at last a mournful but serene quiet in the thought that great changes, whether of joy or sorrow, were over for her.

So three whole years went by; and when she least expected it, Elizabeth's long watch ended. Darrell Vaughan roused suddenly out of the stupor which usually oppressed him. For a day or two memory and bodily strength seemed returning; then as suddenly he failed, and the flickering gleam of intelligence faded. Mr. Carstoe and Elizabeth were with him. He died as a child might, vacantly repeating the prayer Elizabeth whispered; and she could remember that "Our Father," on whom he called at her bidding, is infinite in His mercy.

Now five whole years have gone, and in the bright autumn weather Elizabeth has

once more sought the beautiful Swiss valley, and for a time taken up her abode in the quaint old dwelling where she had spent some of the pleasantest weeks of her girlhood.

Miss Janet was urgent that she should have at least a twelvemonth's change and relaxation, so Elizabeth has come away. Meg is with her, growing a tall, handsome girl, loving, gentle, and affectionate—a constant source of comfort to Elizabeth.

Darrell Vaughan had few relatives; they were men upright and just as Launce Cromlin. When Vaughan died, the whole of his great fortune was still devoted to the uses to which Elizabeth consecrated it during the past years; the heirs signified to her through Mr. Carstoe their desire for this.

Launce Cromlin has won great fame during these years. Elizabeth hears of his success and is glad; but even since her freedom no communication has passed between them.

Elizabeth hears of Nathalie too. Poor Nathalie, she cannot help smiling when she thinks of her. Excitement Nathalie must have. While Monsieur La Tour lived she found it by worrying him with her penitence and remorse. Three scenes each day and two

in the night were the least Nathalie could consent to make; and Susanne grew so weary of so much repentance and goodness, that she took her money and went to live in Brittany.

Nathalie has gone through many phases of religious belief since she was a widow. For awhile she remained a fervent Papist; on one occasion undertook a pilgrimage in the dress of a Dominican nun with sandals on her feet, and looked in the newspapers to be horrified by a glowing account of her adventures, and wept bitterly when she found none. She wearied of Papacy after that, gave up all idea of entering a convent, fell in with some new sects, and for a season was a prophet and at the head of a society where all the members worked with their hands, and fed on vegetables, and saw visions, and were generally very uncomfortable. Finally, Nathalie had a vision which warned her to set out for Jerusalem to convert Jews and Moslems. On the road she encountered some dignitaries of the Greek Church and became a proselyte at once, and not venturing longer to believe in visions, relinquished her work of conversion. After that, she thought of becoming a missionary to some Cannibal Island, but recollected the long

sea-voyage necessary to reach such a spot, and decided she was not really "called."

About the time of Darrell Vaughan's death, Elizabeth heard from her in Geneva; she was living in that dull town, and had become a Calvinist. She sent Elizabeth several brimstone tracts and threatening Sunday school books of her own composition. She added warning letters, in which she urged Elizabeth to renounce her errors of faith, and follow in Calvin's footsteps, if she would save her soul alive.

Elizabeth has lately seen her—she stopped at Geneva on her way to Clarens. Nathalie has married a Geneva preacher, one Monsieur Fautal—a little, bony man, the ugliest of his race, but an earnest and sincere one. Nathalie wears striped dresses of coarse worsted, has cut her hair short, is prematurely thin and old. She hates the change, and cries over the loss of her beauty, and is terrified at her own regret. Her faith is as full of brimstone as her tracts, and she hates that too, yet is afraid that in spite of her efforts, her hard work, she is among the luckless wretches "fore-ordained to damnation," and sometimes has hysterics in the midst of the prayer-meetings. But Monsieur Fautal is very patient with her, and

she has great influence as the minister's wife in her little circle. She is always trying to drag sinners into the fold,—upon one occasion absolutely attacking the Roman Catholic Bishop on the steps of his own chapel. Poor Nathalie! Elizabeth smiles and sighs as she thinks of her, but hopes the restless soul may at last reach the dawn—at least she wants to do right.

So in the twilight of an October evening, Elizabeth sits under the great willow by the lake shore, and looks out at the mountains, still glorious with heavenly light. Meg, seated in a window of the villa, sings softly as she dreams the dreams of budding girlhood, and her voice reaches Elizabeth, and mingles pleasantly with her meditations.

She is thinking of the past, as she may do now—thinking a little too of the future, but trying to avoid fancies and hopes—content to leave it all in God's hands.

The twilight deepens; the last glow fades from the mountain tops. The waters ripple past, shadowy and dark, till on a sudden the moon comes up and tinges their sweep with her yellow splendour. Meg has ceased to sing; the low breeze has died; the very waves are still. Elizabeth thinks the whole scene a type

of the great silence and repose which have come into her life; but she will not be saddened or impatient. A step sounds on the greensward—a voice calls her name. She looks up—Launce Cromlin is beside her.

THE END.

PRINTED BY E. J. FRANCIS, TOOK'S COURT, CHANCERY LANE, E.C.

NOVEMBER, 1874.

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S

PUBLICATIONS.

London:
SAMUEL TINSLEY,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

*** Totally distinct from any other firm of Publishers.*

NOTICE.

The PRINTING and PUBLICATION of all Classes of BOOKS, Pamphlets, &c.— Apply to MR. SAMUEL TINSLEY, *Publisher,* 10, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.*

SAMUEL TINSLEY'S
NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE POPULAR NEW NOVELS, AT ALL LIBRARIES IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

A DESPERATE CHARACTER: a Tale of the Gold Fever. By W. THOMSON-GREGG. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A novel which cannot fail to interest."—*Daily News.*

ALDEN OF ALDENHOLME. By GEORGE SMITH. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Pure and graceful. . . . . Above the average."—*Athenæum.*

ANNALS of the TWENTY-NINTH CENTURY; or, the Autobiography of the Tenth President of the World-Republic. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"From beginning to end the book is one long catalogue of wonders. . . . Very amusing, and will doubtless create some little sensation."—*Scotsman.*

"By mere force of originality will more than hold its own among the rank and file of fiction."—*Examiner.*

"Here is a work in certain respects one of the most singular in modern literature, which surpasses all of its class in bold and luxuriant imagination, in vivid descriptive power, in startling—not to say extravagant suggestions—in lofty and delicate moral sympathies. It is difficult to read it with a serious countenance: yet it is impossible not to read it with curious interest, and sometimes with profound admiration. The author's imagination hath run mad, but often there is more in his philosophy than the world may dream of. . . . . We have read his work with almost equal feelings of pleasure, wonderment, and amusement, and this, we think, will be the feelings of most of its readers. On the whole, it is a book of remarkable novelty and unquestionable genius."—*Nonconformist.*

"The adventures of President Milton . . . are told with excellent spirit. The vivid imagination of the author, and his serious and quaint narrative style, are not the only delightful features of this thoroughly amusing book."—*Public Opinion.*

AS THE FATES WOULD HAVE IT. By G. BERESFORD FITZGERALD. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

BARBARA'S WARNING. By the Author of "Recommended to Mercy." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

Samuel Tinsley, 10 Southampton Street, Strand.

BETWEEN TWO LOVES. By ROBERT J. GRIFFITHS, LL.D. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

BORN TO BE A LADY. By KATHERINE HENDERSON. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

"Miss Henderson has written a really interesting story. . . . The heroine, Jeanie Monroe, is just what a Jeanie should be—'bonny,' 'sonsie,' 'douce,' and 'eident,'—having a fair and sound mind in a fair and sound body; loving and loyal, true to earthly love, and firm to heavenly faith. The novelist's art is exhibited by marrying this gardener's daughter to a man of shifting principles, higher in a sense than she in the social scale. . . . The 'local colouring' is excellent, and the subordinate characters, Jeanie's father especially, capital studies."—*Athenæum.*

BUILDING UPON SAND. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

"It is an eminently lady-like story, and pleasantly told. . . . . We can safely recommend 'Building upon Sand.'"—*Graphic.*

CHASTE AS ICE, PURE AS SNOW. By Mrs. M. C. DESPARD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d. Second Edition.

"A novel of something more than ordinary promise."—*Graphic.*

CRUEL CONSTANCY. By KATHARINE KING, Author of 'The Queen of the Regiment.' 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"It is a very readable novel, and contains much pleasant writing."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"In this story Miss King has made an advance. She has avoided many of the faults which are so apparent in 'Lost for Gold,' and she has bestowed much pains upon delineation of character and descriptions of Irish life. Her book possesses originality."—*Morning Post.*

DISINTERRED. From the Boke of a Monk of Carden Abbey. By T. ESMONDE. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

DR. MIDDLETON'S DAUGHTER. By the Author of "A Desperate Character." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

FAIR, BUT NOT WISE. By Mrs. FORREST-GRANT. 2 vols., 21s.

"'Fair but not Wise' possesses considerable merit, and is both cleverly and powerfully written. If earnest, it is yet amusing and sometimes humorous, and the interest is well sustained from the first to the last page."—*Court Express.*

FIRST AND LAST. By F. VERNON-WHITE. 2 vols., 21s.

FLORENCE; or, Loyal Quand Même. By FRANCES ARMSTRONG. Crown 8vo., 5s., cloth. Post free.

"It is impossible not be interested in the story from beginning to end."—*Examiner.*

"A very charming love story, eminently pure and lady-like in tone, effective and interesting in plot, and, rarest praise of all, written in excellent English."—*Civil Service Review.*

"The book is excellently printed and nicely bound—in fact it is one which authoress, publisher, and reader may alike regard with mingled satisfaction and pleasure."—*Nottingham Daily Guardian.*

"'Florence' is readable, even interesting in every part."—*The Scotsman.*

FOLLATON PRIORY. 2 vols., 21s.

"'Follaton Priory' is a thoroughly sensational story, written with more art than is usual in compositions of its class; and avoiding, skilfully, a melancholy termination."—*Sunday Times.*

GAUNT ABBEY. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT, Author of "Building upon Sand," "Nearer and Dearer," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

GOLDEN MEMORIES. By EFFIE LEIGH. 2 vols., 21s.

"There is not a dull page in the book."—*Morning Post.*

GRAYWORTH: a Story of Country Life. By CAREY HAZELWOOD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Carey Hazelwood can write well."—*Examiner.*

"Many traces of good feeling and good taste, little touches ot quiet humour, denoting kindly observation, and a genuine love of the country."—*Standard.*

HER GOOD NAME. By J. FORTREY BOUVERIE. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Who steals my purse steals trash: 'Tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

Othello.

HILDA AND I. By MRS. WINCHCOMBE HARTLEY. 2 vols., 21s.

HILLESDEN ON THE MOORS. By ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE, Author of "The Mistress of Langdale Hall." 2 vols., 21s.

"Thoroughly enjoyable, full of pleasant thoughts gracefully expressed, and eminently pure in tone."—*Public Opinion.*

IN SECRET PLACES. By ROBERT J. GRIFFITHS, LL.D. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

IS IT FOR EVER? By KATE MAINWARING. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A work to be recommended. . . . . A thrillingly sensational novel."—*Sunday Times.*

JOHN FENN'S WIFE. By MARIA LEWIS. Crown 8vo., 7s. 6d.

KATE BYRNE. By S. HOWARD TAYLOR. 2 vols., 21s.

KITTY'S RIVAL. By SYDNEY MOSTYN, Author of 'The Surgeon's Secret,' etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Essentially dramatic and absorbing. . . . . We have nothing but unqualified praise for 'Kitty's Rival,' which we recommend as a fresh and natural story, full of homely pathos and kindly humour, and written in a style which shows the good sense of the author has been cultivated by the study of the works of the best of English writers."—*Public Opinion.*

LORD CASTLETON'S WARD. By Mrs. B. R. GREEN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"This is novel of character as well as of incident, and Mrs. Green has been studious in balancing fairly the two elements which combine to make her work not only interesting but instructive. The events are pleasingly described, and are of a nature to arrest attention. They are natural and dramatic, and so arranged as to succeed each other with increasing interest. The plot, without being intricate, is sufficiently involved to create a desire to follow its development and conclusion. . . . Mrs. Green has written a readable story, fresh and bright. . . . It is very readable."—*Public Opinion.*

"There is a great deal of love-making in the book, an element which will no doubt favourably recommend it to the notice of young lady readers. . . . Being a novel suited to the popular taste, it is likely to become a favourite. . . . Sensationalism is evidently aimed at, and here the author has succeeded admirably. . . . Mrs. Green has written a novel which will hold the reader entranced from the first page to the last. . . . Emphatically a sensational novel of no ordinary merit, with plenty of stirring incident well and vividly worked out. . . . Florence de Malcé, the heroine and Lord Castleton's ward, is a masterpiece."—*Morning Post.*

MARY GRAINGER: A Story. By GEORGE LEIGH. 2 vols., 21s.

"A very remarkable, a wholly exceptional book. It is original from beginning to end; it is full of indubitable power; the characters, if they are such as we are not accustomed to meet with in ordinary novels, are nevertheless wonderfully real, and the reader is able to recognise the force and truth of the author's conceptions. The heroine is such a creation as would be looked for in vain in literature outside the pages of Balzac or George Sand—a noble but undeveloped character, of whom, nevertheless, we are inclined to believe that many a counterpart is to be found in real life."—*Scotsman.*

MR. VAUGHAN'S HEIR. By FRANK LEE BENEDICT, Author of "Miss Dorothy's Charge," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

NEARER AND DEARER. By ELIZABETH J. LYSAGHT, Author of "Building upon Sand." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A capital story. . . very pleasant reading . . . With the exception of George Eliot, there is no other of our lady writers with whom Mrs. Lysaght will not favourably compare."—*Scotsman.*

"We have said the book is readable. It is more, it is both clever and interesting."—*Sunday Times.*

NEGLECTED; a Story of Nursery Education Forty Years Ago. By Miss JULIA LUARD. Crown 8vo., 5s. cloth.

NOT TO BE BROKEN. By W. A. CHANDLER. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

ONLY SEA AND SKY. By ELIZABETH HINDLEY. 2 vols., 21s.

OVER THE FURZE. By ROSA M. KETTLE, Author of the "Mistress of Langdale Hall," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

NO FATHERLAND. By MADAME VON OPPEN. 2 vols., 21s.

PERCY LOCKHART. By F. W. BAXTER. 2 vols., 21s.

"A bright, fresh, healthy story. . . . . Eminently readable."—*Standard.*

"The novel altogether deserves praise. It is healthy in tone, interesting in plot and incident, and generally so well written that few persons would be able justly to find fault with it."—*Scotsman.*

RAVENSDALE. By ROBERT THYNNE, Author of "Tom Delany." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A well-told, natural, and wholesome story."—*Standard.*

"No one can deny merit to the writer."—*Saturday Review.*

RUPERT REDMOND: A Tale of England, Ireland, and America. By WALTER SIMS SOUTHWELL. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

SHINGLEBOROUGH SOCIETY. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

SONS OF DIVES. 2 vols., 21s.

"A well-principled and natural story."—*Athenæum.*

STRANDED, BUT NOT LOST. By DOROTHY BROMYARD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

THE ADVENTURES OF MICK CALLIGHIN, M.P. a Story of Home Rule; and THE DE BURGHOS, a Romance. By W. R. ANCKETILL. In one Volume, with Illustrations. Price 7s. 6d.

THE BARONET'S CROSS. By MARY MEEKE, Author of "Marion's Path through Shadow to Sunshine." 2 vols., 21s.

"A novel suited to the palates of eager consumers of fiction."—*Sunday Times.*

THE D'EYNCOURTS OF FAIRLEIGH. By THOMAS ROWLAND SKEMP. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"An exceedingly readable novel, full of various and sustained interest. . . . . The interest is well kept up all through."—*Daily Telegraph.*

THE HEIR OF REDDESMONT. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Full of interest and life."—*Echo.*

THE INSIDIOUS THIEF: a Tale for Humble Folks. By One of Themselves. Crown 8vo., 5s. Second Edition.

THE LOVE THAT LIVED. By Mrs. EILOART, Author of "The Curate's Discipline," "Just a Woman," "Woman's Wrong," &c. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Three volumes which most people will prefer not to leave till they have read the last page of the third volume."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"One of the most thoroughly wholesome novels we have read for some time."—*Scotsman.*

THE MAGIC OF LOVE. By Mrs. FORREST-GRANT, Author of "Fair, but not Wise." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A very amusing novel."—*Scotsman.*

"Mrs. Forrest-Grant gives us a really original tale, the plot of which is alike well conceived and executed; and the characters in which, whether good or bad, attract or repel the reader with resistless fascination. . . . It is a capital tale."—*John Bull.*

THE SECRET OF TWO HOUSES. By FANNY FISHER. 2 vols., 21s.

"Thoroughly dramatic."—*Public Opinion.*

"The story is well told."—*Sunday Times.*

THE SEDGEBOROUGH WORLD. By A. FARE-BROTHER. 2 vols., 21s.

"There is no little novelty and a large fund of amusement in 'The Sedgeborough World.'"—*Illustrated London News.*

THE SURGEON'S SECRET. By SYDNEY MOSTYN, Author of "Kitty's Rival," etc. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

"A most exciting novel—the best on our list. It may be fairly recommended as a very extraordinary book."—*John Bull.*

"A stirring drama, with a number of closely connected scenes, in which there are not a few legitimately sensational situations. There are many spirited passages."—*Public Opinion.*

THE THORNTONS OF THORNBURY. By Mrs. HENRY LOWTHER CHERMSIDE. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

THE TRUE STORY OF HUGH NOBLE'S FLIGHT. By the Authoress of "What Her Face Said." 10s. 6d.

"A pleasant story, with touches of exquisite pathos, well told by one who is master of an excellent and sprightly style."—*Standard.*

"An unpretending, yet very pathetic story. . . . We can congratulate the author on having achieved a signal success."—*Graphic.*

TIMOTHY CRIPPLE; or, "Life's a Feast." By THOMAS AURIOL ROBINSON. 2 vols., 21s.

"This is a most amusing book, and the author deserves great credit for the novelty of his design, and the quaint humour with which it is worked out."—*Public Opinion.*

"For abundance of humour, variety of incident, and idiomatic vigour of expression, Mr. Robinson deserves, and will no doubt receive, great credit."—*Civil Service Review.*

TOO LIGHTLY BROKEN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A very pleasing story . . . . . very prettily told."—*Morning Post.*

TOM DELANY. By ROBERT THYNNE, Author of "Ravensdale." 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A very bright, healthy, simply-told story."—*Standard.*

"All the individuals whom the reader meets at the gold-fields are well-drawn, amongst whom not the least interesting is 'Terrible Mac.'"—*Hour.*

"There is not a dull page in the book."—*Scotsman.*

TOWER HALLOWDEANE. 2 vols., 21s.

TWIXT CUP and LIP. By MARY LOVETT-CAMERON. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"Displays signs of more than ordinary promise. . . . As a whole the novel cannot fail to please. Its plot is one that will arrest attention; and its characters, one and all, are full of life and have that nameless charm which at once attracts and retains the sympathy of the reader."—*Daily News.*

WAGES: a Story in Three Books. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A work of no commonplace character."—*Sunday Times.*

WANDERING FIRES. By Mrs. M. C. DESPARD, Author of "Chaste as Ice," &c. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

WEBS OF LOVE. (I. A Lawyer's Device. II. Sancta Simplicitas.) By G. E. H. 1 vol., Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

WEIMAR'S TRUST. By Mrs. EDWARD CHRISTIAN. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"A novel which deserves to be read, and which, once begun, will not be readily laid aside till the end."—*Scotsman.*

WILL SHE BEAR IT? A Tale of the Weald. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

"This is a clever story, easily and naturally told, and the reader's interest sustained throughout. . . . A pleasant, readable book, such as we can heartily recommend as likely to do good service in the dull and foggy days before us."—*Spectator.*

"Written with simplicity, good feeling, and good sense, and marked throughout by a high moral tone, which is all the more powerful from never being obtrusive. . . . The interest is kept up with increasing power to the last."—*Standard.*

TOXIE: a Tale. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

GREED'S LABOUR LOST. By the Author of "Recommended to Mercy," etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

SOME OF OUR GIRLS. By Mrs. EILOART, Author of "The Curate's Discipline," "The Love that Lived," "Meg," etc., etc. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

HER IDOL. By MAXWELL HOOD. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

IN THE PRESS (*Nov. 2nd*, 1874).

A WOMAN TO BE WON. An Anglo-Indian Sketch. By GEORGE ADAMS. 2 vols., 21s.

"She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;
She is a woman, therefore may be won."
—TITUS ANDRONICUS, Act ii., Sc. 1.

FAIR IN THE FEARLESS OLD FASHION. By FREDERICK FARMLET. 2 vols., 21s.

SPOILT LIVES. By MRS. RAPER. 1 vol., 7s. 6d.

'TWIXT WIFE AND FATHERLAND. By LILI KUPER. 2 vols., 21s.

TWO STRIDES OF DESTINY. By S. BROOKES BUCKLEE. 3 vols., 31s. 6d.

UNDER PRESSURE. By T. E. PEMBERTON. 2 vols., 21s.

ALICE GODOLPHIN. By MARY NEVILLE. 1 vol., 10s. 6d.

Notice:

NEW SYSTEM OF PUBLISHING ORIGINAL NOVELS.

VOL. I.

THE MISTRESS OF LANGDALE HALL: a Romance of the West Riding. By ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE. Complete in one handsome volume, with Frontispiece and Vignette by PERCIVAL SKELTON. 4s., post free.

(*From THE SATURDAY REVIEW.*)

Generally speaking, in criticising a novel we confine our observations to the merits of the author. In this case we must make an exception, and say something as to the publisher. The *Mistress of Langdale Hall* does not come before us in the stereotyped three-volume shape, with rambling type, ample margins, and nominally a guinea and a half to pay. On the contrary, this new aspirant to public admiration appears in the modest guise of a single graceful volume, and we confess that we are disposed to give a kindly welcome to the author, because we may flatter ourselves that she is in some measure a *protégée* of our own. A few weeks ago an article appeared in our columns censuring the prevailing fashion of publishing novels at nominal and fancy prices. Necessarily, we dealt a good deal in commonplaces, the absurdity of the fashion being so obvious. We explained, what is well known to every one interested in the matter, that the regulation price is purely illusory. The publisher in reality has to drive his own bargain with the libraries, who naturally beat him down. The author suffers, the trade suffers, and the libraries do not gain. Arguing that a palpable absurdity must be exploded some day unless all the world is qualified for Bedlam, we felt ourselves on tolerably safe ground when we ventured to predict an approaching revolution. Judging from the preface to this book, we may conjecture that it was partly on our hint that Mr. Tinsley has published. As all prophets must welcome events that tend to the speedy accomplishment of their predictions, we confess ourselves gratified by the promptitude with which Mr. Tinsley has acted, and we heartily wish his venture success. He recognises that a reformation so radical must be a work of time, and at first may possibly seem to defeat its object. For it is plain that the public must first be converted to a proper regard for its own interest; and, by changing the borrowing for the buying system, must come in to buy the publisher out. He must look, moreover, to the support and imitation of his brethren of the trade. We doubt not he has made the venture after all due deliberation, and that we may rely on his determination seconding his enterprise. All prospectuses of new undertakings tend naturally to exaggeration, but success will be well worth the waiting for, should it be only the shadow of that on which Mr. Tinsley reckons. He gives some surprising figures; he states some startling facts; and, as a practical man, he draws some practical conclusions. He quotes a statement of Mr. Charles Reade's, to the effect that three publishers in the United States had disposed of no less than 370,000 copies of Mr. Reade's

latest novel. He estimates that the profits on that sale—the book being published at a dollar—must amount to £25,000. Mr. Reade, of course, has a name, and we can conceive that his faults and blemishes may positively recommend themselves to American taste. But Mr. Tinsley remarks that if a publisher could sell 70,000 copies in any case, there would still be £5,000 of clear gain; and even if the new system had a much more moderate success than that, all parties would still profit amazingly. For Mr. Tinsley calculates the profits of a sale of 2,000 copies of a three volume edition at £1,000; and we should fancy the experience of most authors would lead them to believe he overstates it. It will be seen that at all events the new speculation promises brilliantly, and reason and common-sense conspire to tell us that the reward must come to him who has patience to wait. *Palmam qui meruit ferat*, and may he have his share of the profits too. Meanwhile, here we have the first volume of Mr. Tinsley's new series in most legible type, in portable form, and with a sufficiently attractive exterior. The price is four shillings, and, the customary trade deduction being made to circulating libraries, it leaves them without excuse should they deny it to the order of their customers.

The story is interesting and very pleasantly written, and for the sake of both author and publisher we cordially wish it the reception it deserves.

Vol. II.

PUTTYPUT'S PROTÉGÉE; or, Road, Rail, and River. A Story in Three Books. By Henry George Churchill. Crown 8vo., (uniform with "The Mistress of Langdale Hall"), with 14 illustrations by Wallis Mackay. Post free, 4s. Second edition.

"It is a lengthened and diversified farce, full of screaming fun and comic delineation—a reflection of Dickens, Mrs. Malaprop, and Mr. Boucicault, and dealing with various descriptions of social life. We have read and laughed, pooh-poohed, and read again, ashamed of our interest, but our interest has been too strong for our shame. Readers may do worse than surrender themselves to its melo-dramatic enjoyment. From title-page to colophon, only Dominie Sampson's epithet can describe it—it is 'prodigious.'"—*British Quarterly Review.*

"It is impossible to read 'Puttyput's Protégée' without being reminded at every turn of the contemporary stage, and the impression it leaves on the mind is very similar to that produced by witnessing a whole evening's entertainment at one of our popular theatres."—*Echo.*

EPITAPHIANA; or, the Curiosities of Churchyard Literature: being a Miscellaneous Collection of Epitaphs, with an INTRODUCTION. By W. FAIRLEY. Crown 8vo., cloth, price 5s. Post free.

"Entertaining."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*
"A capital collection."—*Court Circular.*
"A very readable volume."—*Daily Review.*
"A most interesting book."—*Leeds Mercury.*
"Interesting and amusing." *Nonconformist.*
"Particularly entertaining."—*Public Opinion.*
"A curious and entertaining volume."—*Oxford Chronicle.*
"A very interesting collection."—*Civil Service Gazette.*
"Although we have picked several plums from Mr. Fairley's book, we can assure our readers that there are plenty more left. And now that the long evenings are once more stealing upon us, and the fireside begins to be comfortable, suggesting a book and a quiet read, let us recommend Mr. Fairley, who comes before us in the handsome guise and the capital type of the enterprising Mr. Samuel Tinsley."—*Derbyshire Advertiser.*

HARRY'S BIG BOOTS: a Fairy Tale, for "Smalle Folke." By S. E. GAY. With 8 Full-page Illustrations and a Vignette by the author, drawn on wood by PERCIVAL SKELTON. Crown 8vo., handsomely bound in cloth, price 5s.

"'Harry's Big Boots' is sure of a large and appreciative audience. It is as good as a Christmas pantomime, and its illustrations are quite equal to any transformation scene.... The pictures of Harry and Harry's seven-leagued boots, with their little wings and funny faces, leave nothing to be desired."—*Daily News.*
"Some capital fun will be found in 'Harry's Big Boots.'... The illustrations are excellent, and so is the story."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

MOVING EARS. By the Ven. Archdeacon WEAKHEAD, Rector of Newtown, Kent. 1 vol., crown 8vo., 5s.

A TRUE FLEMISH STORY. By the Author of "The Eve of St. Nicholas." In wrapper, 1s.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE SECTS. Crown 8vo., price 5s.

ANOTHER WORLD; or, Fragments from the Star City of Montalluyah. By HERMES. Third Edition, revised, with additions. Post 8vo., price 12s.

THE FALL OF MAN: An Answer to Mr. Darwin's "Descent of Man;" being a Complete Refutation, by common-sense arguments, of the Theory of Natural Selection. 1s., sewed.

POETRY, ETC.

THE DEATH OF ÆGEUS, and other Poems. By W. H. A. EMRA. Fcp. 8vo., 5s.

HELEN, and other Poems. By HUBERT CURTIS. Fcp. 8vo., 2s. 6d.

MISPLACED LOVE. A Tale of Love, Sin, Sorrow, and Remorse. 1 vol., crown 8vo., 5s.

THE SOUL SPEAKS, and other Poems. By FRANCIS H. HEMERY. In wrapper, 1s.

SUMMER SHADE AND WINTER SUNSHINE: Poems. By ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE, Author of "The Mistress of Langdale Hall." New Edition. 2s. 6d., cloth.

THE WITCH of NEMI, and other Poems. By EDWARD BRENNAN. Crown 8vo., 10s. 6d.

MARY DESMOND, AND OTHER POEMS. By NICHOLAS J. GANNON. Fcp. 8vo., 4s., cloth. Second Edition.

THE GOLDEN PATH: a Poem. By ISABELLA STUART. 6d., sewed.

THE REDBREAST OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: Lines from the Latin of Peter du Moulin, sometime a Prebendary of Canterbury. Translated by the Rev. F. B. WELLS, M.A., Rector of Woodchurch. Handsomely bound, price 1s.

THE TICHBORNE AND ORTON AUTOGRAPHS; comprising Autograph Letters of Roger Tichborne, Arthur Orton (to Mary Ann Loder), and the Defendant (early letters to Lady Tichborne, &c.), in facsimile. In wrapper, price 6d.

BALAK AND BALAAM IN EUROPEAN COSTUME. By the Rev. JAMES KEAN, M.A., Assistant to the Incumbent of Markinch, Fife. 6d., sewed.

ANOTHER ROW AT DAME EUROPA'S SCHOOL. Showing how John's Cook made an IRISH STEW, and what came of it. 6d., sewed.

NOTICE.—A new work by the Hon. Grantley F. Berkeley.

FACT AGAINST FICTION. The Habits and Treatment of Animals Practically Considered. Hydrophobia and Distemper. With some remarks on Darwin. By the HON. GRANTLEY F. BERKELEY. 2 vols., 8vo., 30s.

"It is refreshing to meet with a book like Mr. Berkeley's, written not only by a sportsman, but by a sportsman of the old school.....Taking his volumes all in all, they are an agreeable and useful contribution to a subject which he has studied with all his heart and soul through a long and active lifetime."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"Mr. Berkeley has lived with animals all his life, and has a happy knack of making friends with them. Nor can we wonder at it when we see how keenly he loves them, how thoroughly he has come to understand their natures, and how closely he studies their individual characters and humours their little weaknesses.....Mr. Berkeley's hints on breeding and hunting hounds, on rearing and preserving game, are well worth reading; but naturally it is not easy to do them justice in a brief notice. In his talk about hounds, what strikes us is the close attention he has evidently paid to their habits, which makes his advice the more valuable.....But we may have said enough to show that the book is profitable as well as amusing."—*Saturday Review.*

"A book on field sports and the best means of enjoying them is sometimes as repulsive and dry reading as a work on geometry. Mr. Berkeley here gives an autobiography as much as a handbook of sports, and intersperses the details of hunting, riding to hounds, and other rural pastimes, with so much light and interesting matter that he has provided a consolidated fund of enjoyment for all who take an interest in any branch of rural life..... It is certainly impossible to rise from any examination, long or short, of the author's lucubrations without becoming a better sportsman and a more experienced lover of the art than when the book was first opened."—*Morning Post.*

NOTICE. In the Press.

In 2 vols., 8vo., price 30s., uniform with the above.

UNTRODDEN SPAIN, and her Black Country. By "VERDAD."